The Last Christian

George Kibbe Turner

THE LAST CHRISTIAN

SHE WAS VERY PALE—A TALL FIGURE IN
A WHITE GOWN—RATHER OLD-FASHIONED

THE LAST CHRISTIAN

BY

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CHAPTER I

The Universal Crisis

THE time of the Great Crisis for the Earth in 1886 was, as it happened, a matter of great concern and importance to me personally. From the beginning of the year I had heard them talking continually of Hell. But I find that my mind goes back naturally to the summer Sunday afternoon when the four bearded men sat together in my grandfather's sitting-room, canvassing the whole great matter thoroughly.

I stood, from the beginning of it, at Mr. Griswold's knee, where he had called me—perfectly silent. The great, bony knuckle of his knee-joint lay hard at my back, and once or twice, in moving, I touched unintentionally the long gray beard, which hung almost to his waist.

I felt his lean leg stiffening behind me as the president of the Christian College talked on. A question burst from him at last.

"Tell me," he said, "is this book the Word of God or of Professor Smyth?"

"Yes," said the long brown missionary, leaning forward eagerly, "tell us that."

He stretched out gauntly from his chair—all brown: a lean brown face, a small round head, a round brown beard, and an Adam's apple, which appeared and disappeared in the scanty margin of his whiskers as he talked, and little eyes that gleamed brilliantly.

"In the light of modern discovery," said the president of the Christian College, "can it be a question whether we shall have intelligent interpretation of the Scriptures? If so——"

"No, not at all. This is not interpretation," said Mr. Griswold loudly.

"Certainly not," said Mr. Means, the missionary.

"Interpretation, no!" said Mr. Griswold; "whittling, and whittling! Picking and choosing what you want, and throwing all the rest away. What's left is not the religion of Jesus Christ; it is the religion of Egbert Smyth."

"You are right," said the missionary.

"I tell you," said Mr. Griswold, shaking with nervous tension, "and you mark my words. When we give up the Word of God as it is written, when the Smyths and Perkinses make over our religion for us, the day of the last Christian has come!"

Mr. Griswold had been an awesome figure to me always, but he was appalling when he became aroused. It was not his huge, bony frame alone, nor his loose, erratic movements, nor his long gray

beard. More than these, it was the deep-set eyes, which gleamed out between his hollow temples, intense and brilliant—like a fever in a skull. And he was continually catching fire from his religious feeling.

"Thank God," his vibrant voice continued, "that day will never come!"

A shiver of relief passed over me as he said it. Even the suggestion worried me.

I had been forgotten long before. I knew it, and I would have gone out gladly. And yet I did not move, for fear I might in some way disturb my elders.

"I should hope not, I am sure," said President Mercer of the Christian College, and smiled slightly, but very politely, as he said it. He was a spare, dark man, with thin side whiskers, which fell on either side of his face with the peculiar lifeless droop of an old-fashioned black string tie; a yellow man, who was always taking white homeopathic pills from a little vial. Of all the theologians who called on us from the world abroad, he represented the most advanced culture.

"I think we need have no fear of that," he said.

"No; God will see to that!" said Mr. Means, the missionary.

"But, Mr. Griswold," asked President Mercer, "do you yourself believe to-day in a literal Hell of fire?"

"Who does not," asked Mr. Means quickly, "who believes in the inspired Word of God?"

My grandfather watched him silently from his arm-chair, turning his sharp black eyes from one face to another, biting at a wisp of his silver-tipped black beard—saying nothing. He never spoke at times like this, when he entertained the learned preachers from the White Church on Sunday.

"And you believe that all who have not accepted Christ—all, every one—are eternally condemned to it?"

"How could I believe otherwise and have seen what I have seen?" asked the missionary. "What folly, what folly!" he went on bitterly. "Here are millions of our fellow men waiting on the edge of an eternal torment; and they propose that we say to them: 'We do not know. We are not sure. But no doubt, no doubt, you will have a period of probation in another world.' Nonsense, and worse than nonsense! Do you know what that would mean?"

President Mercer shook his head.

"It would mean the death of Christian missions. Yes. The disappearance of the Christian religion from the earth."

"It is an immense question," remarked President Mercer, "this discussion that is convulsing now the world of thought."

"What is your belief?" asked Mr. Griswold suddenly of President Mercer.

"I confess I am not clear," answered the president of the college. "Are you?" He always asked a question back.

"I am," replied Mr. Griswold. "I stand upon the Word of God."

"Absolutely," said the missionary.

"There is no doubt of what it means," said Mr. Griswold. "It says it clearly."

"One trial and no more," called Mr. Means.

"Yes," said Mr. Griswold.

"And failing that?" asked President Mercer.

"God's immutable penalty—the everlasting pangs of Hell," said the brown missionary, and his eyes gleamed.

"It is an immense question," said President Mercer, "an immense question!"

And, there being a pause in a long argument, I glanced at my grandfather, and caught his eye and got consent. And I moved awkwardly and self-consciously out of the sitting-room. My going was not noticed, except by President Mercer, who smiled sadly but politely at me. A few hasty steps, a feeling of relief at the nape of my neck from the glance of eyes that were not looking at me at all, and I was out in the dining-room and the door was closed behind me.

And there, beside the door in the dining-room,

stood my grandmother, where she had been listening—white and trembling.

"I am very glad you came out, Calvin," she said quickly. "Let us go into the bedroom and read."

She took my fingers into her cold hand and started toward her bed-chamber, which led out of the dining-room. But first I stopped to get my book from the secretary. All the books in our house were in the secretary—the upper part of our writing-desk. There were five large tan volumes of the Encyclopedia and two of Natural History, full of illustrations of animals. I was forbidden to read these on Sunday. All of the rest of the books, prose or poetry, were Biblical, or founded on Bible fact. I must choose one from these for Sunday reading. I chose, as I usually did, the story of Bunyan's Christian; and went into the bedroom, where my grandmother was already sitting, with her two books on her lap.

I knew perfectly well that my grandmother had been listening to the conversation in the sitting-room, and the reason why she had done so. And yet, strangely enough, it made very little impression on me.

My grandmother was a little woman who was always cold. Her lips were cold, the flesh on her fingers was loose and cold, and she wore, even in summer, a small gray worsted shawl close drawn

about her shoulders. She had not been well for several years—since the time when my father and mother had been killed in "the Accident." And she sat every day, nearly all the afternoon, reading in her bedroom.

Over the bed was the big steel engraving of "The Crucifixion," full of figures in pain. Above her, at one side of the window by which she sat, was a photograph of my father—a long, dark face, long nose, and black eyes which followed me about the room. He had been my grandmother's only child.

Since the beginning of that year, when they talked so much of Hell, my grandmother, I knew, had followed that discussion continually. The past few weeks she had been sitting, with her two books, her flexible leather Bible and her brown Concordance, searching out, day after day, the texts quoted in the progress of the argument. The leaves of the Concordance were worn and darkened at the places of exposition of the three words for Hell.

She read more rapidly that afternoon than I had ever seen her, fumbling nervously at the books in her haste to find the texts that they had quoted in the sitting-room. She was breathing hard, as I had noticed her doing lately. Once, looking up, I saw that she seemed to be having one of her spells of shivering.

But the long Sunday afternoon wore on, and finally I heard the deep tones of the men's voices in the front hall and the jar of the front door, and I knew that the Sunday visitors had gone on to the house of Mr. Griswold, beyond the church. And still my grandmother kept reading in her two books—with her eyes focussed now, I could see, where they usually stopped—at that worst of all texts:

"Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

I looked up. My grandfather was in the doorway, his sharp black eyes upon my grandmother. Still she kept at her reading.

"I thought you were getting the better of this," said my grandfather sharply.

My grandmother started quickly. "I do try—I do try, Mr. Morgan," she said nervously. She always called him "Mr. Morgan." Her two books slipped down to the floor.

"You have got to get control of yourself," said my grandfather.

He stooped down for the books, and laid them precisely—as he did everything—upon the table by the bed.

"Yes, Mr. Morgan, I know I have—I know I have," said my grandmother. "But yet——"

"We won't discuss it now," my grandfather

said, and looked at me. Yet he must have known that I knew quite well already.

That night I awakened with a start. It was very late. There was the sound of a strange voice in the house, and I knew, with a jump of my heart, that the doctor was there. I was up in my bare feet, at the head of the stairs, listening. For some time they were in the bedroom. The back staircase stretched down, a black hole, below me. I held my breath and listened. And finally I heard my grandfather and the doctor coming opposite the other side of the stairway door below me.

"—her mind," the doctor was saying.

"Worry," said my grandfather. "Our boy."

"I thought so," said the doctor.

"The fact of the matter is," my grandfather explained abruptly, "our boy never joined the church."

"I remember," said the doctor.

"And toward the last of it, I suppose he got to be kind of a free-thinker."

"As good a fellow as ever lived!" said the doctor.

"And then," went on my grandfather slowly, "you know—the Accident."

"Yes," the doctor said. "And now this everlasting talk of Hell fire."

"Yes," said my grandfather.

"New England's Hell. Do you know what it does, principally?" asked the doctor.

"I am no theologian," said my grandfather.

"It burns up the women. Ten generations of New England women have been burned alive by it! How many of them have I seen myself. Older women. Take my own mother. I have to——"

They moved farther from the door.

"Serious——" my grandfather was saying.

"—kill her if——" said the doctor.

They were in the sitting-room, out of earshot.

I was in bed again—puzzled and well frightened, but soon asleep.

In the morning my grandmother was up and about at breakfast-time again. I looked at her with fear and apprehension. Would she die? How did people look before they died? As far as I could see, she seemed little changed. Weaker, perhaps, a little more short of breath—that was all.

But it was that next night that my grandmother began coming into my room with her lamp. She had always put me to bed when I was very small; but now, never. It was my grandfather's belief that I was old enough to go to bed alone when I was six.

But, that night, the light of the lamp upon my face waked me. I was a little frightened at first,

and I lay still and looked without moving. Then I decided not to move at all. I did not know, in fact, just what I should do. Several times she looked at me, and once she bent as if to touch me. But finally, with a sigh, she turned, and her shadow turned slowly after her and followed the yellow light of her lamp—went out of the room. And very soon I was asleep again.

The next night, and the night after, she did this. But the fourth night she stopped and spoke to me:

"Calvin," she whispered, "Calvin, are you awake?"

"Yes, ma'am," I said, sitting up quickly.

She sat down beside me on the edge of my bed, leaving her lamp on the stand.

"Lie down, Calvin," she said; and, when I had done so, she took my hand in her cold fingers.

"Do you ever lie here in your bed, Calvin," she asked, "and think of God, and how good He is to you?"

"Sometimes I do," I answered. And so I did; I was reminded to do so continually.

"So kind, so kind," she said. And her hand shivered in mine as she said it: "Did you never want to do something for Him?"

"Yes, I do," I said, with the rush of emotion with which I had always responded to such an appeal.

"Did you ever think you would like to join the Church?"

"Yes, I did one time," I said. I had. It was at a time, two years before, when two other boys, a little older than I, had done so.

"And now would you?" she asked; and her hands shook still more in mine.

"Yes, I would. I know I would," I said, still under the emotion that had wakened in me.

My grandmother leaned over suddenly, and I felt her cold, wet lips upon my forehead.

"My boy, my little boy!" she whispered.

Her emotion surprised me. She kissed me very seldom. But then I saw that she was not looking at me at all—but past me.

"This is your father's room, Calvin," she said, sitting up and looking across it.

I waited.

"I used to come in to see him here, as I do you to-night, when he was no older than you are now."

She got up, apparently without noticing me any longer.

"And now he has gone," she said absently, taking up her lamp and starting for the door. Then she turned and looked at me again.

"You will not forget?" she said.

"No, ma'am, I will not," I told her.

The shadow closed upon the room, and I was alone again.

I lay awake for some time after she went out, thinking. Then, as now, your bedroom is the place where you yourself, stark alone, as you will be in the hour you die, face the facts of the universe as they are to you—without disguise or color or companion.

I was twelve; and I lay and stared across the dark into the universe as I knew it then.

CHAPTER II

The White Church

THE Universe in which I first found myself was divided into two parts. The first of these was the Earth.

There was a street of white houses, ranged behind two parallel lines of large elm trees—white houses with pillars in front of them. I lived in the largest house with the largest pillars—my grandfather's. Next to us was the House of God—a tremendous white building, with huge white fluted pillars stretching upward to its roof. At the top of them, the pigeons cooed and chuckled somewhere out of sight. From my bedroom window, at night I could see the high black windows on its side.

The Earth went outward to the ragged tops of the mountains close behind the town—and ended in the sky. And there, above us, stretched the second and vastly more important part of the Universe, which I knew just as certainly as the Earth.

Toward the center of it, at an angle of about sixty degrees from the Earth, was God, a great, gray-bearded Presence—much larger than a man

—seated upon a high white throne. Round him were countless multitudes of saints and angels—and seraphim, with one pair of their six wings across their eyes. The dead were there also—my father and mother. There was a City with crystal walls, a Glassy Sea, and a River with a Shining Shore. Everything was white and luminous with internal light. And there was always certain rapture in the sense of intensity and whiteness of this light.

This second part of the Universe—Heaven—could not be seen; it was too distant. But I cannot remember the time when I did not know it was there. I learned it before I can remember; but the sources of my knowledge I know perfectly well.

From my grandmother I learned the fact and location of this part of the Universe, and the emotion with which all thought of it should be accompanied. She spoke to me of it as soon as I could understand articulate speech; explained the presence of God there, and of my father and mother; and taught me, at the beginning of my own use of words, to address myself there—kneeling, bowing my head, raising my hands or my eyes—with every possible expression of profound emotion.

My clear and detailed vision of Heaven I learned from songs the women sang. I can not,

in fact, remember the time when I did not hear the women singing of Heaven.

The street of white houses was a silent place, usually. The sharp sound of chopping wood now and then—of pounding; but little human noise and laughter, and that almost all of children. But no day passed, and few hours, when I could not hear some woman, in one of the houses, singing the joys of Heaven—simple, plaintive, monotonous songs, with the refrain sung over and over again, until they beat into my memory a sharp and vivid picture of the topography and inhabitants of the great division of the Universe above me.

The most familiar of all of these songs of the women was "There's a Land that is Fairer than Day"; the most impressive, to me, "Where the Waves of Eternity Roll." And the one that I liked best, and that my grandmother often sang to me:

> Shall we gather at the river,
> Where bright angel feet have trod—
> With its crystal side forever
> Flowing from the Throne of God.

There were many of these songs describing the details of Heaven. I knew many of them myself before I could read.

Both from my grandmother's teachings and from the words of these songs, I learned the relation of the two parts of the Universe to each

other. I learned that the dead, who had lived upon the Earth, were now in Heaven; and that we, now upon the Earth, must sometime follow them there. The songs that the women sang were full of joy and anticipation of the change; and twice this change had come to persons upon the street of white houses. I heard the women singing their songs of joy and peace and promise in the houses of the dead.

I may have had some knowledge at that earlier time that there was a third dimension of the Universe—the part below the horizon-line and underneath my feet. But, if I had, I never realized it. It was spoken of covertly, if at all. And, for me, Hell practically had no existence until I began myself to attend the White Church. Indeed, I had never obtained the clear vision of it that I had of the remainder of the Universe—of the Earth or of Heaven. I knew it was a fact, but it never greatly terrified me—even in that year when they were continually talking of it.

Before I was five years old I began to attend the White Church and to be given systematic instruction concerning the Universe out of the Bible, from which I had always known that all the knowledge in the women's songs and my grandmother's teachings had been drawn.

The great White Church, long before I attended it, was the most impressive and mysterious

object in my world. It was the gathering-place and one great center of emotion for all people. On Sundays it was continually filled with solemn voices. On three nights a week there was light in its high windows, and the sound of women singing and the rhythm of voices—the voices of older men—in prayer. And four nights a week I saw, as I lay in bed, that the high windows were black, and I knew that darkness brooded in the great upper room, where the golden Gothic letters over the pulpit arch announced the fact I knew so well.

This is None Other but the House of God

In the basement of the White Church, which was fitted up for the instruction of the children from the Bible, I learned, from the time that I was five, the history and philosophy of the making of the Earth and of Man, and Man's progress upon the Earth—as God revealed it to the ancient Hebrews. And I learned with deep and purifying emotion the Christians' history of the saving of mankind by God's Son.

In a way, I had a complete knowledge and philosophy of the Universe. The information was all there, of course; but it was not entirely made clear to me.

And so it remained for me, like those about me, to have my complete and final knowledge of the Universe, in its full three parts, from the min-

ister of the White Church, Mr. Griswold. Sunday after Sunday, from the time I was six, I heard that great, vibrant voice, expounding it from behind the high black pulpit underneath the golden motto of the House of God.

There were three parts of the Universe, he proclaimed—each with very definite relations to the others. There was the Earth, populated with teeming millions of men, unsaved. There was a Heaven above, made possible to us only by the awful Blood Atonement of the Son of God. And there was Hell beneath us, in which all men who were not Christians must go at death, for perpetual torment.

This was the Universe that I lay in, and faced and measured my relations to, that summer night when I was twelve. It was still early summer—the time before the insects start their singing through the night. A light breeze sucked the muslin curtains to the window and jogged the window-screen at intervals. Outside there—in the dark Silence, the White Church, the Earth; the deep sky,—and God, the Great Judge, always watching!

Never since have I lived in a universe so real, so definite, so full of high emotions. Compared to it, the one that most of us live in to-day is the shadow of a shadow. But, of all of it, that one part, Hell, which was not in the Universe that I knew first, lacked—in spite of all the disturbing

talk and emotion of that year—the sense of reality that the others had. It was not fear which drove me, that summer night, to my decision to become a member of the White Church. It was the emotion of worship and reverence and gratitude, which was taught me before the time I knew articulate speech; and which still, for all of us, makes the Heaven above us the involuntary goal of all our deep emotions.

I had only one cause for hesitancy—embarrassment, the fear of standing there before the congregation of the White Church on Sunday; and also, almost as great, my awe of Mr. Griswold, the minister.

I saw him nearly every day. They lived just beyond the White Church. I watched him tramping by in all weather—going to services and to funerals, with his Bible; carrying flowers from his deep garden to the sick: alone, head down, talking to himself; or, with his little daughter, head up, striding down the street. He was a man of moods, but always, in any mood, an awe-inspiring figure to me. I dreaded greatly that first visit to him.

But at last, one afternoon in the latter part of June, I found myself—driven by an extraordinary effort of my will—at the door of the White Parsonage. The door swung back, and the minister's little daughter stood in the doorway.

"He's very busy," she said decidedly. "Couldn't you come some other time?"

"I would rather see him now," I answered. I could not face the idea of repeating, from the beginning, that effort of dragging myself up the gravel walk to the front door.

"Do you *have* to see him now?" she asked a second time, standing squarely in the middle of the doorway. Her eyes were blue-gray—and as fixed and determined in their place as a gray stone wall. But now I had the incentive to break by them. I had to.

"I've got to see him, Ceeste; honestly, I have," I repeated. And then she let me in.

I had known her all my life. She was a very decided girl, and rather quick-tempered. She was the best runner, for a girl, in our school. But now she was kept in the house a great deal. Since her mother had been so sick, she had taken charge of the house herself considerably, and of her father. He was a very absent-minded and careless man.

"All right," said Celeste Griswold, with a sigh, "but he is working on his sermon."

But now her manner changed. "Won't you come out into the study?" she said politely; and she left me there while she went upstairs.

I sat there in a big chair and waited motionless —in that dim, impressive place—that place of

learning and study of the man of supernatural wisdom. It was a room full of books—all one side was books. I never had seen so many of them anywhere else. They were brown volumes, a good share of them, with leather backs; and there was a dry and dusty smell from them which filled the room. Over them were pictures—of old ruined buildings.

It was very still; little sounds stood out clearly. Once or twice I heard the coughing of Mr. Griswold's wife upstairs. And I had a most uncomfortable knowledge of my own heart beating. But at last there was the scrape of a chair on the floor above me and the sound of the minister coming down the stairs. My heart thumped to hear it. Then Mr. Griswold stood in the white doorway, focusing his kindly eyes upon me.

"Good afternoon, my boy," said Mr. Griswold. "What is it that you have come to see me about?"

I stammered through the reason of my call upon him. My message was difficult enough; but my awe of the man and the place made me still more inarticulate. And I was never more surprised than when I raised my eyes and saw the effect upon Mr. Griswold of what I had been saying.

"I am glad," he said—very solemnly; but his whole face had lighted up, and the tone of his voice changed entirely.

"I am glad." He took both of my hands in one of his, covering them. "Sit down," he said; and, as we sat there, asked me a few simple questions about my faith.

I answered them as best I could—but satisfactorily. He told me so.

Then suddenly the minister let go my hands, stood up, and started walking in the room. He stopped abruptly, and stood before me.

"You can not know, my boy—but these last few days have been a time of awful struggle for me. To-day I have been especially instant in prayer."

I did not speak. I had no idea how to answer him—nor what the struggles of such a man could be.

And he went on, in a low voice, as if I were not in the room at all:

"I have been discouraged; I own it. There has been hesitation—a feeling of heaviness—I cannot describe it—in the Christian Church, here and everywhere. And with young people especially. But now—now—I see!"

His eyes looked farther and farther away, and a sharper fire kindled in them.

"O, ye of little faith!" he said suddenly, and struck his clenched fist on the arm of his chair.

"And so you see, Calvin," he said at last, his eyes returning to me, "I am very glad—glad and

humble for what you have told me—for the thing that I have seen to-day."

"Yes, sir," I said tentatively.

"I will tell you, my boy," he went on buoyantly, "what we will do. My daughter is ready to join the church. You two shall join it together. It will be a day of joy for all of us." His eyes shone with affection as he spoke of Celeste. They always did.

He talked to me then as I had never been spoken to before—as an adult and an equal. It seemed to me that the experience must be an incident of the new state of life that I was assuming. But he spoke particularly of the events that I would see in my life and he would not.

"I have never known such years," he said, "as these that we are passing now. New attacks every day, strange faiths, strange gods—yes, literally, my boy—those who proclaim themselves as gods. I could tell you, Calvin——" he said, and stopped.

"My boy," he went on, and laid his hand upon my knee, now, exactly as if I were an adult, "you will see much greater changes, stranger faiths, bitterer assaults, than I have ever seen. I know it. But you will also see a greater triumph.

"Remember that—always! The greater the assaults, the greater at the end will the triumph be."

It was a long time before he dismissed me

finally. The afternoon shadows of the elms had shifted greatly on the sidewalks when I went out.

I was naturally under great emotion when I left, and when I saw across the wide roadway Miss Avery upon her piazza, lying among her pillows, I could not keep myself from going over to her. There were few people whom I would have told my news to. But I felt that she should know.

Miss Avery had taught me in the basement of the White Church, since I had gone there a child of five. She was a little woman, very neat, and very highly educated. She was the greatest reader in all the White Church. But what I remembered best of her always were her eyes—bright, restless eyes like a bird's, in a dull white face; and hands that were never quiet.

For several months now, Miss Avery had not taught us. She was often ill—recently she had been very sick. And for several hours each day she sat upon her porch, as she was sitting now. The strange cousin, from Boston, who had come to take care of her, was with her, reading aloud, as usual—her frizzled head, parted carefully through the middle, bent down over the book which they were always studying together. She stopped when I approached, and fixed on me her calm and mirthless smile.

I realized too late how far my enthusiasm had

driven me. It was extremely distasteful for me to tell Miss Avery of my intention before this stranger. But I had gone too far to avoid it now.

"That's very nice, Calvin," Miss Avery said, when I had spoken. "Your grandmother will be so pleased." And she increased, by a very little, the smile that now lay always on her face. But that was all. And after that there was silence. She was lukewarm—only too obviously. I could not understand it, and my enthusiasm was suddenly and most unexpectedly chilled. Finally I turned and went away.

The two women turned their strange smile upon me as I left—a smile perpetually alike, I thought, on both of their faces. And, before I was out of the yard, I heard the dry, monotonous voice of the cousin, Mrs. Thursby, reading from their book.

I was, in fact, considerably surprised at the lack of interest which this change, that caused such a stress of emotion in myself, occasioned in others. My grandfather, even, said very little of it to me. And though several older people did speak of it to me, they seemed more often to be talking in a spirit of mere forced politeness than from real enthusiasm.

I remember, in particular, meeting Mr. Tubbs, the organist. He was a little, thick-set man with a heavy mustache,—a very friendly, talkative men,

who always wore an Odd Fellow's badge upon his coat lapel.

"Well, well," said Mr. Tubbs, "so you are going to join the Church, Calvin. Well, well!"

That was all he said. But many of the other expressions seemed to me almost as vacant.

One day, I remember, Mrs. Judd addressed me in her quavering voice.

"The young must take our places; the young must take our places. We shall soon be gone!" she said. And asked, as usual, most solicitously for my grandmother's health.

She seemed old. They all seemed old.

But then, I remember clearly—not exactly as you remember realities, but as you recall a very vivid dream—the Sunday morning on which I was admitted to the White Church. I was, in fact, in a state of intense nervousness, which placed me in a kind of daze.

The White Church was filled with the serious congregation of my boyhood—the staid, respectable citizens and heads of families at the opening of their pews; at the other end their wives; and, in the interval between them, their families, or, in the case of older people, a vacant space where the families had been. All very stiff and clean and serious, with the sense of the Sabbath heavily upon them. Across the aisle from us I saw Mr. Doty, with his white vest and Prince Albert coat, and his

continual smile. Next to my grandfather, he was the leading giver in the White Church now.

On the other side of our pew sat the daughter of the minister, Celeste Griswold—her russet hair in sharp contrast with the immaculate white dress she wore. And with her that morning was her mother—a tall, pale woman with reddish hair, who held her hand continually at her throat to stop her coughing during service. She rarely came to the White Church now, because of this. That morning she was there only because of the first communion of her daughter.

The text that day was from I Kings, Chapter 18, which recounts the bloody downfall and death of the priests of Baal before Elijah. And the subject of the sermon was "The Living God and the Dead."

The minister was in a different mood that Sunday than he had been for many Sundays past—buoyant, triumphant, and strong. His great voice rattled in the four corners of the room as he rehearsed the tragic downfall of the dead gods.

I wondered vaguely about the gods that were dead. I was too nervous really to think. I was deeply and genuinely moved by the ceremony which lay before me. But my mind dwelt chiefly, I must admit, upon the awful progress alone up the aisle that was to follow on the ending of the

sermon. It came at last. The voice of the minister aroused itself for the closing.

"We fret," he cried. "We worry. We are greatly troubled. 'How long?' we cry. 'How long? Is the coming of Thy kingdom to be delayed forever.' And God replies: 'What are your times to me? A year is a day in mine eyes and a thousand years a watch in the night. All will come right in my good pleasure.'

"And then, if we will only watch, we too can see the progress for ourselves.

"Where now are the dead gods of the heathen? Where is Baal or Buddha? And where are now Confucius and Mohammed? Gone forever—gone or fast fading from the earth. And never passing faster than they are to-day.

"But we Christians, we know whereof we speak! We have assurances that can never be confounded. Eternal in the heavens sits the Christian's God. Of Him forever sounds the Psalmist's triumph: 'From everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God.'"

He was done. We sang a hymn, turning about and facing toward the choir and the broad back of Mr. Tubbs at his organ. And I realized, almost with a sense of paralysis, that the time had come when I must go alone up the aisle to the place before the pulpit.

I remember the ceremony most indistinctly—

the short, confused answers that I made; the twisting pattern of white lines in the red ingrain carpet, that my eyes were cast upon; the sturdy figure of the girl beside me, answering clearly and distinctly, and looking steadily in the eyes of her father. And, at the end, the sound of the voice of Mr. Griswold praying for God's blessing on "these Thy young servants."

It was over. I passed down the aisle again, stumbling into the entrance of the pew. I took with great reverence, but an overwhelming sense of relaxation and relief, my first communion. Then the congregation left the church, and I escaped, as quickly as I could, the handshakes and the smiles of the older members.

That afternoon I read again beside my grandmother in her bed-chamber. Never had I passed so willingly into the quiet and inactivity of a long New England Sunday afternoon as after the strain and emotion of that morning.

A horse stamped somewhere in a stable. A warbling vireo trailed its intermittent little arabesque of song in the elm trees. Occasionally we heard the hollow note of a crow in the distance. Across the street, we could see Miss Avery and Mrs. Thursby reading from their book.

My grandmother seemed more than usually happy and well to me that afternoon. It was probably the very fact that she had heightened

color which made me think so. I had no idea that she would have that worst of all her attacks that night.

I was awakened again late in the night by the sound of men's voices. I saw again a light upon the grass below the lower windows. And I knew that the doctor had come once more.

I scarcely had got to the head of the stairs when my grandfather came up to me.

"You must come down and see your grandmother," he told me. "She is very sick."

I could hear her breathing. I was afraid to go into the room.

She lay there in the great bed, beneath the dark steel engraving of the Crucifixion, with its figures in pain. It seemed impossible for anything human to be so small and thin and frail. Her smooth hair was dishevelled about her forehead. The wrinkles from across her face centered upon her sunken mouth. Her withered neck moved with difficulty in her breathing. She seemed to be repeating something.

"Speak to her," said my grandfather.

I was greatly embarrassed; I did not know what to say. I kissed her on her cold, wet lips. She reached out her thin hand weakly to take mine, and tried to smile.

My grandfather stood at the foot of the bed, watching her.

Then, all at once, she pushed me feebly from her. "Not that one," she whispered faaintly. "Not that one." And at once she was off muttering again.

"She is counting," said the doctor.

That was it.

"Counting eternity again," he said.

"You may go now, Calvin," said my grandfather.

He stood at the foot of the bed—saying nothing, doing nothing. His black eyes were fixed upon the face upon the pillow. Under his black beard, the muscles of his jaw worked continually.

I started out.

"We will try it now," said the doctor. "It will do no harm."

I left the room. I looked, I thought, for the last time upon my grandmother. If this was not the end, it seemed certain that it could not be long coming.

But I was wrong. That night she lived, and after that she was kept living many months. Something new was coming into the world. We were still to learn of the power of the New Book that the two women were reading.

CHAPTER III

The Secret Book

YOU who are New England born and bred will remember, certainly, the two sharp divisions of the Earth that God gave Man to live in. On the one side the province of the adults, on the other the country of the young. The boundary between these was by no means to be crossed. But, beyond that invisible barrier, we watched our elders move about their own especial affairs, like people in a play. We saw, but were not shown; we heard, but were not told. And it was so, necessarily, that I learned all that I did learn of the progress and nature of this book.

For three months, or more, the two women sat, every pleasant afternoon, on Miss Avery's porch, alone—Miss Avery smiling, and resting; Mrs. Thursby, the cousin from Boston, reading aloud from her book. I could hear the murmur of her reading from our windows.

After that, I saw, Miss Avery waited upon the porch; and Mrs. Thursby, in her close bonnet and purple velvet dress, went visiting in other houses —carrying her book under her arm. And finally I knew she was going in and out the house of the

woman with the weakened spine—the black unpainted house toward the end of the street, where the houses trailed out into the open fields.

She went with her book in and out of that house, that was so different from all our other houses. It was damp and black, with rotted clapboards, while all the rest were white and clean. The family that lived there was very poor. But the special mark upon it was the knowledge of that bedroom in the second floor, in which had lain that woman, bedridden now for twenty years. There was never a sound from that room; never a face at the window. In summer-time the windows were partly open. And I glanced up quickly, as I passed it, and saw, with a half shudder, a little patch of the coarse ceiling at which I knew that woman, motionless but alive, had been staring for longer than I had lived.

But now, after Mrs. Thursby had been there, this woman sat up. I saw her sitting there, propped up by the window, like a great yellow wax doll, with blue lips. And from that time on every one was talking of Mrs. Thursby and her book.

Nearly every one, I should have said. For we kept silence on that subject before my grandfather. I knew, from the first, that he hated it. I had never seen the book. I had the vaguest of ideas about it. But the thing was in the air; and

away from our house I talked of it, as the rest did. I discussed it often with Celeste Griswold on our way to high school in the village—partly in earnest, partly to see Celeste become excited over it.

"Do you think she did really cure her, reading from that book?" I asked Celeste.

"You know what I think!" Celeste Griswold answered. "It's blasphemy and nonsense. It ought to be burned up, all—every copy of it!"

The color rushed to her face, and she stopped talking. And I laughed. I did not take it very seriously then. But it did seem to me, in my heart, blasphemous that a woman should write a book to take the place of the Bible.

After that, two or three more women began to go to Miss Avery's, to hear the reading of the book, and to repeat the special prayers they had. If you watched, you could almost tell them by their expression. For they all began to wear that smile—that odd, distant, image-like expression which I had seen first upon Miss Avery's face while Mrs. Thursby read her book.

Miss Avery sat by Mrs. Thursby as she read, and welcomed the other women as they came in. I saw her do so often. And she now wore a pink dress—all pink, and a pink ribbon in her hair, instead of that neat black gown she had always worn before.

That was the first thing that I had ever heard my grandfather speak of.

"It was Joe Crosby's color," my grandmother answered him. "He always liked her in it."

"It makes her look a hundred years old," said my grandfather.

"It is a very trying color for any one, Mr. Morgan," my grandmother answered.

"Too bad he died. She'd made him a good wife," said my grandfather. "Instead, look at her now—an old maid gone crazy on this female religion."

"They say it's helped her," said my grandmother softly.

"Fol-de-rol," said my grandfather. "Woman's nonsense."

My grandmother did not answer him. She never did, when he felt about anything the way he did about Mrs. Thursby and her book.

My grandmother was an invalid now, after that last night when she was so sick—a little better sometimes; sometimes down with a relapse. She sat most of her time in her bedroom—beneath the picture of my father. They would have taken it away, I think, if they had dared. But that she would not allow. But they had taken her two books—her Bible and her Concordance. For her mind must be kept off that old excitement—that

fear, which had overcome her in that year when every one talked of Hell. That was done now. We heard no more of it—in our house, at least. The Great Crisis of the Earth was gone as if it never had existed, and had left not an echo behind.

Afternoons, when school was done, Celeste Griswold quite often would come over and sit with my grandmother, and study or read to her. Celeste was like her father in that way. She had gone with him often, since she was a very little girl, when he visited sick people. Now she often went alone. She was a good reader—clear and steady. When my grandmother wanted reading, she read; when she wanted quiet, Celeste would study. She had a new idea now—Celeste: she was going to college. She had given her whole soul to it.

"My father went to college, and his father. Just because I am a woman, do you think I shall be robbed of it?" she said. "I'd go, if I had to crawl there on my hands and knees."

She made me mad, the way she studied.

"Do you know what book it is your grandmother reads and hides?" Celeste Griswold asked me suddenly, one day.

That was the first hint I had.

"It's the Bible," I said, guessing.

"No," said Celeste.

"Then it's the Concordance," I said.

"No, it isn't," said Celeste positively. "It's something else."

But I still thought that she was wrong.

I watched, myself, after that. It was true. There was a book my grandmother was reading. Once I saw it—a bunch under the bedclothes in the bed near her chair. Once, when I was in the yard outside, I looked in and saw her plainly, with a book in her lap, following the lines slowly with her forefinger. So I knew she was reading again. And I was anxious. For, naturally, I still thought she was reading the texts on Hell again in her Bible.

I don't know how long it was before I knew more—weeks, months perhaps. But then, one afternoon, I came home, and started out to my grandmother's bedroom, and there was some one in there—with the door closed. I stopped outside, not knowing what to do; for that door was almost never closed. And, as I stood there, I realized that Miss Avery was inside, reading.

"My poor head!" said my grandmother, interrupting her. "I'm afraid—I am afraid I don't understand it."

"Only eat of the Little Book," said Miss Avery's patient voice. "Only keep eating of the Little Book. Listen"—I heard the sound of slip-

ping leaves. "Hear what it says." She read again:

"'St. John writes in the tenth chapter of his book of Revelation: "And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud; and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire; and he had in his hand a little book open; and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth."'

"Now see what it says," said Miss Avery, more loudly, and read on:

"'The angel or message which comes from God, clothed with a cloud, prefigures divine Science. To mortal sense, Science seems at first obscure, abstract and dark. [Miss Avery repeated this sentence twice.] But a bright promise crowns its brow. When understood, it is Truth's prism and praise.'"

It seemed strange to me, I must say—stranger even than the Book of Revelation itself. For now I realized, of course, that I was listening to the reading of the book of the new religion, founded by the woman of Boston.

"You see!" Miss Avery went on. "And now, here!" she said eagerly, and read again:

"'Then will a voice from harmony cry, "Go, and take the Little Book—Take it, and eat it up, and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be

in thy mouth sweet as honey." Mortals, obey the heavenly evangel. Take divine Science. Read this book from beginning to end.'

"You see," said Miss Avery, breaking off.

"Yes," said my grandmother, "I think I do. Only my poor head. Only I worry so."

"But you mustn't, dear," said Miss Avery. "You mustn't worry. That's just it. You must eat of the Little Book—and it will cure you of that false belief—of your fear, as it did me."

"Does it really prove it isn't so—that—that fear of mine?" my grandmother asked hesitantly.

"It does; it surely does. It proves that it is error—all false. Mortal error, and nothing else," said Miss Avery. "Oh, Aunt Eunice, read it—read it! It wipes away your fears; it brings you peace. I know. It brought me happiness I had never had, not once—from that time when my trouble came to me."

"I know, I know," said my grandmother softly.

Then there was silence. And I realized, for the first time, that I was standing there motionless, possessed with listening.

"You can't forget," Miss Avery was saying very softly, "our Dear Leader is a woman. She understands—she understands how women are!"

There was another silence.

"Only read it," said Miss Avery all at once.

"Read it; and repeat the words I gave you—those words that helped me so."

She was getting up to go. I must go somewhere myself. I dared not walk boldly in. So I turned, and was outdoors in the yard when Miss Avery left the house.

She had gone but a little time before I was in the house again, and was reading the Bible, the tenth chapter of Revelation. It was all there—exactly as she had read it—the mighty Angel, and the Little Book, and the command to eat it. Quite naturally, I thought of this often, afterward. And it did disturb me, in a way.

I don't know that I can quite describe the effect my growing knowledge of that book had on my mind. It was apprehension, chiefly apprehension that it might be true. And, coupled with it, still that troubled and eerie sensation always connected with the Book of Revelation, with its angels, and dragons, and jeweled cities.

On its face, the doctrine semed absurd to me. And yet, there were various corroborations of it, always rising for discussion in my mind. There, certainly, in the Bible was the mention of the Little Book; there was the raising of the bedridden woman. And, very soon, across the boundary of silence that kept us from the province of our elders, I could see the disturbance and commotion the book was causing there.

The women who smiled had formed a little congregation of their own now. There were ten or twelve of them, mostly members of the White Church. And on Sundays they turned in at Miss Avery's as the thin stream of the old congregation passed into the church across the street. It was no secret, now, that Mr. Griswold was much troubled by this.

For some time the minister had been in one of his disturbed and gloomy moods.

You could tell. He was walking alone again—head down, out through the village, out often into the hills. He covered miles in a day. His loose stride was tremendous. And at dusk, upon a country road, as I have met him, he was a fearsome figure—in his long black coat, striding, gesticulating sometimes, and sometimes even talking. For he made his sermons so, quite often.

His sermons for several Sundays had been severe again, with that favorite gesture of his at such times, constantly repeated—the sudden projecting of that long admonitory forefinger, which pointed to your very soul. And then he preached that sermon directed frankly against the new religion of the women who smiled, that sermon taken from the text of I Timothy 4: 7:

"But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness."

"That was an old-timer—that sermon," said

Mr. Tubbs, the organist, overtaking my grandfather on the way from church.

My grandfather said nothing.

"It's getting toward the end of the church year," said Mr. Tubbs, the organist. "The annual meeting is coming around. If you've noticed, he's been that way the last few years."

"I don't know as I have," said my grandfather.

"You must have," said Mr. Tubbs. "You remember that year, two or three years back, when the ministers got fighting so over Hell. And the old man lost two or three families to the Brick Church in the village over it. The nearer the annual meeting came, and the nearer the end of the year, the more he kept on preaching those old-time brimstone sermons—worse and worse. You remember that!"

"I remember something of the kind," said my grandfather.

"He wouldn't give it up, would he—not if they all left?"

"No. Good day," said my grandfather; for we were at our gate.

It was two or three nights after that when Mr. Griswold burst into our house—at nine o'clock at night.

"May I speak to you, Mr. Morgan?" he said. "Is it too late?"

He had been tramping the country roads again. His boots were splashed with mud.

"No," said my grandfather. "Sit down." And he closed the door from the sitting-room to the dining-room, in which, as usual, I sat studying my lessons for the next day. Their earlier conversation reached me only very little; but gradually their voices rose and claimed my attention.

"How many of them have gone?" I heard my grandfather ask sharply.

"Three families, anyway—perhaps one more," said Mr. Griswold.

"Fools," said my grandfather.

I can hear them still, if I try to remember—the minister's big voice, the smart staccato speech of my grandfather.

"We're falling back," said Mr. Griswold—"membership——"

"Deficit——" my grandfather said.

"And more than that—repairs," said Mr. Griswold.

"How much?" said my grandfather. "What?"

"Everything," said Mr. Griswold. "For one thing, it must be painted."

He meant the church, of course. I realized it as he spoke. It was getting dingy; the paint was peeling in some places. When I had been a little

boy it had always seemed so white—white and glistening. You saw it far down the road.

There was a silence.

"Where will this stop?" asked Mr. Griswold slowly. "A thousand sects, a thousand little personal religions are splitting up the body of the church the world over. Where is this going to end?"

"They're crazy," said my grandfather. "The women are all going crazy."

"Well, yes," said Mr. Griswold. "Perhaps that is the most charitable way to put it."

"Mad as a hatter," said my grandfather—"all but one: all but that old she-devil with the false front. She makes money out of it. She ought to be run out of town."

Mr. Griswold said something I could not hear.

"Crazy," said my grandfather. "And the worst of it is, they're smuggling the thing in everywhere. "You can't tell when they'll bring it into your house or mine."

"Scarcely that," said Mr. Griswold.

"I'd like to see them try it," said my grandfather, "in my house!"

And very soon after that Mr. Griswold went back home again.

Then and many times afterward I would have liked to ask some older person about this thing—to get some explanation. Not that I believed that

it was true. It was the fear it might be possible. There were a number of things I had the same feeling about, when I was that age. One of them was the coming of the end of the world. But no older person ever spoke of this book to me; and there was no one whom I felt free to ask about it. So, as it was, I discussed it with no one but Celeste Griswold.

She had, as usual, an entirely different view from mine—on the mention of the Little Book in Revelation, for example, when I spoke to her about it.

"Certainly it's in the Bible," said Celeste Griswold. "That wouldn't prevent them from stealing it, would it?"

We never looked at matters of this kind alike. I was speculating, even then, on problems of various kinds. Celeste never. What was so with her was so with all her heart.

We debated the matter of my grandmother and her book. It was pretty difficult, we both agreed. I hesitated, in the first place, to project myself into the affairs of older people. For, all my life, I had been trained not to—"to be seen and not heard." And, besides, I had overheard what I knew. I couldn't play the spy on any one. If there was any one thing certain in the ethics of fourteen years, that was it. And yet, we were both afraid of what might happen.

"It's your secret," said Celeste Griswold. "I can't advise you. You've got to do what you think best."

"But if she should get worse?" I said.

"That's it," said Celeste.

But, as it happened, my grandmother did not grow worse. She grew better. I watched her very closely. I could see her lips moving once, twice, three times; and then, gradually, there would start to form that peaceful smile. Day after day I could see grow upon her face that distant, image-like mask of peace that Miss Avery and the other women wore. And day after day she was muttering to herself what I knew must be that formula Miss Avery had given her. I heard it once, in part:

"There is no sin, there is no——" Then I lost it. But she was saying it scores and scores of times a day.

It was rather strange, I have thought since, that my grandfather did not notice it. He was usually so quick to see everything. But there was good reason. That was the year his company was putting in the first electric street lights in the village and on the street. And he thought of nothing else. But all the time he grew bitterer and bitterer against Mrs. Thursby and her book.

We would see her going her deliberate way outside our windows.

"The old witch," said my grandfather. "See her—smuggling that book around!"

He stood there watching her, his legs apart.

"By George, she'd better not bring it here!" he said.

And almost as he said it, within a minute or two, my grandmother was chanting to herself that formula she had gotten from her and Miss Avery:

"There is no sin. There is no—death." I did not know it all yet.

My grandfather was especially excited at the time the woman with the spinal trouble had a relapse. The report was that she was dying. I heard Mrs. Judd tell my grandfather of it, in her pitiful voice, myself.

"Isn't it too bad?" said Mrs. Judd. "Too bad! Why must they drag her up to die?"

"They ought to be in jail, every one of them," said my grandfather.

But the woman with the spinal trouble did not die. She was up again, and once more sitting at her window, like a faintly smiling corpse. But still my grandfather talked no less bitterly.

"They'll kill her before they get through," he said to the doctor.

"How do you know?" the doctor said. "She's better now, isn't she?" He was always joking.

"Better," said my grandfather. "She never

was sick. She had no more spinal trouble than I have."

"Who knows what she had?" the doctor said.

My grandfather knit his brows. "Father-Mother God!" he exclaimed. "A female God! What blasphemy will they get up next?"

"Why not?" said the doctor. "We have had a male God for some time. Now the women are trying their hand at religion. I rather like it, as far as they've got."

"You go too far sometimes," said my grandfather curtly.

"No; I mean it," said the doctor, and smiled. "See what they've done already. They've abolished Hell, and pain, and the Earth—everything they didn't want—and moved in a body into Heaven."

"A woman's Heaven," said my grandfather.

"Yes," said the doctor, and he laughed. "That's right—a woman's Heaven—no pain, no death, no separation—an eternal family reunion, with all the children home."

"You can make up your mind that book will never come into my house," my grandfather said abruptly, and stopped talking.

The doctor merely smiled. I have often wondered if he didn't know then. My grandmother was so changed. The hunted look was going from her eyes; her hands were quieter; and on her face

now was settling permanently that mask of peace of the new faith.

My grandfather was out a great many evenings now at his business meetings. And my grandmother and I were alone in the house. She sat with me in the dining-room, where I studied my lessons. And I left her there when I went to bed.

I was abed and asleep that second time when I heard Miss Avery there. The sound of their voices had wakened me. For the door into the dining-room at the foot of the back stairs had been left ajar, and I could hear perfectly what went on there.

"It troubles me—it troubles me still," my grandmother was saying. "More than all the rest."

"Tell her; instruct her," said Miss Avery. Then there was a pause.

"Hell, Hades, Sheol—yes, they have troubled us," said another voice, calmly and deliberately. I lay awake, listening intently; for it was the voice of Mrs. Thursby.

"But now we know," she went on. "Hell is nothing—nothing but another name for Error. Error, that is all—supernal Error."

She paused. I could smell, even from where I lay, the rather strong perfume that she always wore.

"Death, too," she went on; "that is another

of our names for Error. Both are simply poor mortal belief. You take that poor woman with the broken spine. Twice now, mortal Error—what we have wrongly called death—twice this mortal Error has claimed her for its own. And twice we have contradicted it. We have overcome the false with the true."

"We cause our deaths, Aunt Eunice," said Miss Avery's gentle voice. "We make our Hells, thinking they are so. It is our fear."

"Read the Little Book," said Mrs. Thursby. "That will show."

"Oh, I have read; I have," said my grandmother hurriedly. "And I have found peace in it—wonderful peace. But sometimes I think—my head, you know, my head. I don't quite seem to understand it—quite. And then that all comes back on me again."

"Fear," said Mrs. Thursby loudly. "Mortal fear. Contradict it."

"I do so," said my grandmother weakly.

"We have little time," said Miss Avery.

"Contradict it; contradict it; that's all!" said Mrs. Thursby. "Now see! I have marked the pages—so. Read them—in this order."

"We'd better go now," said Miss Avery.

"Read them," said Mrs. Thursby. "And when your Error arises, deny it! contradict it firmly, and repeat:

"'There is no sin; there is no sickness; there is no death.'"

There it was at last, Miss Avery's full formula.

"Ah," said my grandmother, with a sharp intake of breath, "no sin—no death—no sickness——"

"And no Hell," she added softly.

"And no Hell," repeated Miss Avery quickly.

"It is all false—all false—all but the mere evidence of the senses. False," said Mrs. Thursby loudly, "I deny it. You must do the same."

"We *must* be going now," said Miss Avery.

"All false," said Mrs. Thursby, getting up. "All to be contradicted. There is no death; there are no senses; there is no body—no material world of sense. It is all, all a dream, a picture painted on the snow. All is God. And God is All-in-All. I leave you this. God the All-in-All. Good night; I shall call again."

"Good night," said my grandmother. "I wish you well."

"You mustn't get up, Aunt Eunice," said Miss Avery.

Not long after they were gone, I heard the hoofs of my grandfather's horse driving sharply back from the village—back from the meeting of the electric light company.

After that, day after day, that smile grew steadier on my grandmother's face. Her hands

lay still upon her lap. She sat there, rocking, smiling peacefully, beneath my father's portrait in her bedroom; whispering, as I saw her sometimes, her contradiction of death and suffering and Hell.

She was better—I knew that—for weeks and months, though she was not strong. The doctor gave up coming very often.

"There's nothing particular I can do. There's no medicine I know of that's of any use," he said. "Feed her well; that's all."

My grandfather asked him something.

"Oh, you can't tell," said the doctor.

But still she was very weak. My grandfather watched her pretty closely.

I remember we were driving home from the village, my grandfather and I, and Mrs. Judd stopped us from the sidewalk. Mrs. Judd, with her white face and reddish eyelids and blond hair, almost as light as an albino's. She walked out into the roadway in her eagerness to speak to us.

"Oh, how is dear Mrs. Morgan?" she asked my grandfather. "How is she to-day, Mr. Morgan? She is so frail, so frail. Oh, I am so glad, so glad to hear it. You must take care of her, Mr. Morgan."

Her voice quavered sharply; her false teeth gleamed brightly—in an ecstasy of sympathy which was very like a smile.

"That old funeral hag!" said my grandfather, when we left her; and said no more before we reached home.

I noticed that Mrs. Judd always asked me, after that, wherever she might meet me, about my grandmother, with an increasing gusto of grief.

"Such a good grandmother, such a good grandmother," she said, in the accents of a mincing sadness. "You will recall her so often when all we older people have passed on."

My grandfather was more at home now. And often he sat in the bedroom, with my grandmother, reading his newspaper—a thing he had never done before. Occasionally he would get up and pull her shawl about her shoulders for her—awkwardly, rattling his paper as he sat down again. A sudden flush would come into the cheeks of my grandmother.

She seemed very little changed, I thought—only very short of breath.

"Oh, nobody can tell anything about it," said the doctor the next time he came in. He still came very little.

I understood, of course. I was old enough for that. But no, I didn't really, either! No one—not the oldest of us—can realize it before it comes; and certainly not a child.

My grandfather would lay his hand occasionally on her shoulder, as he came in—touch her awk-

wardly and suddenly, and pass on. And then—the most curious change of all—he began calling her "my girl."

"Well, how are you to-night, my girl?" he asked briskly, when he came in.

"That's good, that's good," he said brusquely, when she answered him. For she said, always, that she was well.

That name for her seemed so curious—and inappropriate—that old woman, my grandmother! How many years, I have wondered since, had it been since that old-time endearment had been upon his lips. She recognized it, I knew, even then. A sudden flush of feeling gleamed across the everlasting peace of her face.

I was there, too, the night when my grandfather came back, bringing the vase from the city.

"There, my girl," he said. "Look what I bought you."

It was a big red vase with an Italian singing girl painted on it.

"Oh, it's beautiful," said my grandmother, taking it in her trembling hands. "Beautiful."

We had very few ornaments in the house, and none so new and stylish. He took it from her and placed it on a stand where she could see it.

And suddenly, as he turned back, with an abrupt and awkward motion he stooped and kissed her.

Never in my life had I seen him kiss my grandmother before. He started stiffly and self-consciously to straighten up again. But my grandmother clung to his arm with both her hands.

"Oh, Mr. Morgan," she said—"oh, Calvin!" calling him by his first name for the first time in my memory. "Calvin dear, can't we have a good long talk together—sometime?"

She clung to him like a child.

"Yes, yes, Eunice," said my grandfather, embarrassed by his position. "Sometime, when you are stronger."

"Sometime—sometime—when you are not quite so busy—my—Mr.—Morgan," said my grandmother, and her hands slid weakly down his arm into her lap.

"Yes, yes, my girl; we certainly shall," my grandfather said heartily.

I knew what she wanted. She was going to tell him of the Secret Book—when she had the courage. She wanted very much to do so. I could see her eyes following him about, often. But it required a good deal of effort from her. And my grandfather was very busy and preoccupied. And he was so very bitter against it.

So my grandmother said nothing more. I never really saw her reading the book, myself. She sat there in her bedroom, with her perpetual mask of peace upon her face. Over her head was

the picture of my father—that dark, intense face, those eyes that followed you about the room. My grandmother sat there by herself afternoons, always, where she could see it easily by looking up. It was odd; it seemed exactly as if the two were exchanging confidences. She looked at the picture and smiled happily. And it stared back, it seemed sometimes, almost with an expression of knowledge in its eyes.

Over across our lawn, at the home of Mr. Tubbs, the organist, you heard them practising their music before services and funerals, quite often. They were practising there one night, I remember. There was to be a funeral the next day. And I remember very well my grandfather getting up—he was in the sitting-room—and slamming down the window. Then he walked back and sat down in the bedroom with my grandmother, reading his paper.

CHAPTER IV

The Coming of Mortal Error

THAT was the year, as I said, that they put the first electric lights on the street—those first blue, hissing, stammering arc lights. It was wonderful, in a way—that brilliant light flowing through that slender wire; and death, too, if you should touch it. Just one touch—that was all. It killed you. I lay there in my bed quite a little, when the lights first came on, and watched the sharp-cut shadows of the elm leaves upon the side of the White Church—clean white now, where before it had been faint blue-white, just visible across the darkness. It certainly did seem wonderful—at that early time. It was a time of great changes.

I was getting older now. I was fifteen. And already I could see, with clearer understanding than before, across the unseen but impassable barrier that separated the young from the old. There were many changes there in that other world of older people—changes and commotion. I had sensed it more and more clearly since that year of controversy over Hell—that year I had joined the White Church. It didn't trouble me, though

—not much. It was one of the concerns of my elders.

I was unconcerned enough; but it did seem to me that Celeste Griswold was rather glum and silent lately. And, for some reason, I associated this with the changes in the church—with the worry of her father.

I asked her what it was, several times, on our way to school.

"It's nothing," said Celeste Griswold.

"No; really, what is it?" I asked her. "Are you sick?" For she certainly did not look well.

"It's nothing, I tell you!" said Celeste Griswold a little sharply, and would not speak for the rest of the way to school.

But I knew there was something, by the way she acted—her silence, if nothing else. She was hard hit by something. But she wouldn't speak of it. I knew that. That was her way, always.

It was her father, I made up my mind—both from her actions and his. But I didn't realize just what had happened to them until that second night Mr. Griswold came in to see my grandfather, and I heard them, from my place in the dining-room, as they talked it over.

Mr. Griswold came in that night very differently from on the one before. He seemed tired and slow as he shut the door behind him. It was some time before he spoke.

"I want to consult you, Mr. Morgan," he said, finally, "on financial matters. You are a man of business experience and training. I value your opinion highly."

"Go ahead," said my grandfather.

"It is somewhat embarrassing," said Mr. Griswold, hesitating, "to speak of your family affairs, Mr. Morgan. I have never done so, as you know."

"No," said my grandfather.

"But to-day," went on the minister, stumbling, "there were a number of personal bills received unexpectedly. And I had no money for them."

"What salary are they supposed to pay you now —twelve hundred?" my grandfather asked abruptly.

"Yes," said Mr. Griswold. "And, you see, the sickness of my wife——"

"How is she now?" asked my grandfather. "Is she better?"

"Not much, I am afraid," replied Mr. Griswold.

"Too bad; I'm sorry," said my grandfather— changing the subject back again. "Are they paying it to you regularly?"

"That's it," said Mr. Griswold, speaking a little faster. "That's what I wanted——"

"How much do they owe you?" my grandfather interrupted him.

"It is some five or six hundred dollars, I think, now," said the minister.

"What!" exclaimed my grandfather sharply.

Mr. Griswold did not speak.

"That's a shame," my grandfather said. "A shame!"

"No—not that, either," said Mr. Griswold. "That is not just. It was my own doing, partly. There were those repairs that had to be made, you know—those few. I told them I could wait. But now——"

"You had no right to do that," said my grandfather. "No right whatever, with your family as it is."

"Yes, we could do it," answered Mr. Griswold. "We have cut down our expenses. We live very simply. I had hoped," he said, coughing a little, "that I could send my girl to college. But now, of course, I can't—in any case. I have just told her so." He paused again. "That, of course, made some little savings that I had available for us, but——"

"You shall have it, and you shall have it right away," my grandfather said.

"Of course," said Mr. Griswold, "I had no intention, when I came here—of asking for it all now. That isn't necessary."

"You shall have it," repeated my grandfather.

"And you shall have it now! I'll see to that myself."

"Well," said Mr. Griswold, after a little while, "well—I will leave it with you." He paused again. "Thank you!" he said abruptly, and got up and went out the front door.

Now I knew what was the matter with Celeste Griswold. I had overheard it, and I couldn't speak of it to her very well—though several times I almost did so. And she said nothing to me. She was fighting it out by herself, in her own way.

We were working out our two week-day creeds for life then—both of us. That is more than half of the requirement of childhood, you remember. The boys, I know, were busily engaged pounding into me the creed of a man—honesty and courage and disregard for physical pain. Celeste Griswold was acquiring the creed of a woman. I did not know it then. I am not sure that I know it all now. Yet she was learning it, I knew, and, I now know, in that hardest of schools for women—old New England. And one cardinal point in it with her was always silence under pain and trouble. It was merely by chance that I ever knew what she was going through.

I was in our yard one day, after school, working at the lawn (for every day I had my work to do about the place), when all at once, as I was standing near the side of the White Church, I

heard a curious noise in it, repeated twice, three times. There was a window open, just a crack for air. Urged by curiosity, I turned and went into the back entrance of the church. Unexpectedly enough, I found the door had been left unlocked.

I stood inside the doorway first, listening. The oppressive sense of the place closed around me—the mysterious hush of the empty house of God, the close air of the shut place, the dusty smell of carpets and upholstery and books, the echoes starting sharply at the slightest stir.

There was nothing moving in the vestry. There was nothing there except the chairs of various sizes, the light-colored hymn-books on the seats, the blackboard with the text on it and a star in colored crayon, and the cabinet organ—nothing there but an expectant silence. It looked bare and dingy in its emptiness. The carpet was quite badly worn.

I would have gone out then—discretion slyly plucking valor by the sleeve—if I had not heard the slightest of sounds upstairs, a sound like some one whispering. With trepidation entirely unworthy of my years, I crept carefully along up the narrow stairs to the back of the pulpit platform. I looked down through the crack in the door into the great, half lighted, vacant room.

There, in her father's pew, crouched by the side

wall, was Celeste Griswold—her head down, motionless. I watched. Her shoulders moved once or twice convulsively—but she cried almost noiselessly, with a sound scarcely to be heard in that general silence. She raised her head and looked straight forward at the pulpit arch—at the place where I was standing. I shrank back.

"Oh, make me willing, make me willing, make me willing!" she was saying in a fierce and half broken whisper.

I tiptoed down the stairs, out of the silence, into the cool fresh air of outdoors.

Celeste Griswold grew more natural after that—gradually less quiet, more into her own frank, determined, outspoken manner; but still she seemed rather pale.

"What's the matter with the child?" my grandfather asked.

"She's at the time they grow so very fast," my grandmother said.

"She's generally so full of life," said my grandfather.

"Yes," said my grandmother.

No one really knew but myself.

Celeste was with my grandmother quite often, afternoons, reading—studying just the same as if nothing had happened to her. When it was pleasant now, they sat with the French windows open upon the porch, just inside my grandmother's bed-

room. Celeste was with her through that spring—clear to that last day.

I was in a shrub on the lawn, I remember—can I ever forget?—pruning it. The knife was in the air; I can see it still. And suddenly, with that strange, sharp edge of fear upon it, Celeste Griswold's voice:

"Calvin!"

The two women across the street on Miss Avery's porch let drop their book and started to their feet. I dropped my shears.

"Calvin! The doctor!"

That was all she called. But at her voice endless reaches of cold and terror rose before me. My knees loosened under me. I knew. And automatically I started, and was running down the street, toward the doctor's. I was numb; I ran as if I were floating in the air. And as I passed out of our yard I saw the two women starting across the street toward our house.

I ran down the street, over to the house of the doctor. My hat was gone, my hair was blowing in the air. And every now and then I stumbled. The doctor was out—they did not know where. I ran on toward the village, asking for him. No one had seen him. Then some one told me—looking at me very strangely, I remember—that he had already gone to our house. I stumbled back

again, some time after I had left, exhausted, nauseated from running.

When I arrived, they were already there in the sitting-room, all standing—Mr. Griswold and my grandfather on one side; on the other the two women, Miss Avery and Mrs. Thursby. All their faces were strained and drawn, the men's stern, the women's eager. Celeste Griswold stood between them, looking at my grandfather. She had a little paper in her hand.

"It was in her dress," she said distinctly and a little loudly. "She took it out, quickly, like this, and she said: 'Mr. Morgan, Celeste, my—Mr. —Mr.—Calvin.' And then—then," said Celeste Griswold, faltering a little, and looking toward her father, "she—didn't speak again."

"Give it to me," said my grandfather quickly.

I had come in the back way, and I stood like an image, watching. No one noticed me.

My grandfather stood there, staring at the paper. No one moved or said a word.

"What's this?" he said at last. "I can't seem to read it!"

"Take it, read it," he said, passing it suddenly to Celeste.

She took it, stretching it between her hands, and started reading it. Her voice was perfectly steady again.

"There is no sin," Celeste Griswold said in

her clear reading voice; "there is no sickness; there is no death. Read page two hundred and—" She stopped. "I can't,' she said, "quite——"

Mrs. Thursby, standing opposite my grandfather, stepped forward quickly—pushing Celeste aside. She had her book all open in her hand.

"This is it; this is what she means," she said eagerly, and started reading.

Mr. Griswold stepped out from beside my grandfather and prevented her.

"This is no time," he said, and authority spoke in his voice.

"It is just the time; splendid, wonderful, a message of great peace," said Mrs. Thursby.

Then Miss Avery spoke. "No," she said, and put her hand steadily on Mrs. Thursby's arm. Her voice was firm, but gentle still. "No! Only this, Mr. Morgan," she said softly. "This. She tells you by her message: there is no death, there is no death. It is Error—all our mortal Error. Oh, can't you see, Mr. Morgan, nothing has happened here. Nothing! Nothing but our Error—nothing but our mortal Error!"

She grasped my grandfather by the sleeve, and her pale, eager, pitying face looked up to his. Her pink dress showed against the solemn black of Mr. Griswold's coat.

My grandfather did not move. He stood there with the paper in his hand.

"How long has this been going on?" he said. His voice was as dry as ashes.

"For months. She has been one of us for months!" exclaimed Mrs. Thursby.

Miss Avery dropped my grandfather's sleeve.

"Come; we must go now," she said, and took Mrs. Thursby with her.

The two men were left alone in the room, staring.

Celeste Griswold, pushed aside, had turned and looked at me. She was forgotten. Now, as always, we saw our elders moving in their own world, upon their own concerns, without us. And, put aside by them, Celeste's eyes fell naturally, I suppose, on me. She came out toward me. We were in our own world again, they in theirs. I sat down, as she came near the dining-table. All at once I felt exhausted.

It was not sorrow with me. It was not fear, at first—though there was fear, a great fear. But principally it was disbelief in what had happened. It was not so. It could not be! Such things as this did not happen. This tangible real being, that moved beside me and spoke—the realest thing in all the world—gone, nothing! It wasn't true. Far more plausible that I should see, all at once, a mountain back of the town tip suddenly across the valley.

And all the time I had run, and all the time I

had stood there, I thought nothing of religion, nothing of my well-learned land of heaven, nothing of God—excepting for one thing. I was praying frantically to Him. But all I asked Him was to tell me that it wasn't so—that this nightmare wasn't true!

Celeste Griswold sat in a chair beside me, and took my hand in hers. As she touched me, for some reason, my whole emotion changed. Sorrow fell upon me like a great flood. And I fell forward with my forehead upon the cool, smooth table.

"Don't," said Celeste Griswold; "don't."

Her hand held steadily in mine.

I did not weep then—though, after that, Heaven knows the gates were loosed. But then there was no time for weeping. The grief was too strong for that. It took me and shook me in its sudden violence—but not into weeping.

Of the two old men I can remember little. They stood there, I believe, with few if any words. What they said I do not know. I was absorbed by my own grief. But I do remember Mr. Griswold saying at last:

"God be with you, Calvin Morgan," and coming to the door.

"I shall be back again," he said to my grandfather. "Come, little daughter," he called softly.

Celeste Griswold pressed my hand and stood up as he called her.

"You must come now," said Mr. Griswold. "Yes. Later we will come back for him." For she had evidently motioned to him about taking me.

They went out into the hall. I felt suddenly a sense of great loneliness and fear. I sprang up and stood looking at them—through the hall door. Neither of them, I knew, could see me.

The minister stared straight ahead—absorbed in his own thoughts—by the sharp crises in his own world. His face was set and hardened. According to his habit, he was muttering to himself.

"Change," I thought that he was saying. "Change—a thousand changes everywhere."

Celeste walked silently beside him. She was used to his talking to himself. And then—by chance, perhaps—he turned and looked down at her.

"Celeste, my girl," he said, "what is it? Are you faint?"

She caught him by his sleeve.

"No, no," she said. "I'm not." But she huddled closer to him as she spoke.

"You are very white. What is it?" he said sharply. "You must tell me."

"Oh, Father," she said, and clutched his sleeve

again convulsively, like a little child in fear of the dark. "I saw—I saw her die!"

The great figure of the minister stooped. He lifted her lightly into his arms and strode out the door. I ran and closed it after him.

I turned. My grandfather still stood in the sitting-room, with that paper in his hand. In the bedroom I could hear some one. Those People were in there—those Other People, already—at work.

And as I stood there, listening, all at once I felt cold and strangled. That vagrant fear, which had come to me at intervals in the past, and was to change my world in the future came upon me again—full force.

CHAPTER V

THE VAGRANT FEAR

I STOOD still where it caught me—that fear of mine—for a few seconds, half a dozen heart-beats, motionless.

Two hours ago my grandmother had been there in that room, and we had been with her. Now she was alone, silent, without us; and those strangers were there with her—those Other People. I could hear them talking softly at their work.

"She isn't there at all," my scared lips told me, whispering. "She is an immortal soul—in Heaven."

"What immortal soul?" said my fear. "What Heaven? Just what do you mean when you say that?"

And, quick with long practice, I answered in the old familiar words: "I mean what everybody else means—the Heaven that God revealed to us in the Bible."

There I stopped. I refused to go one step further. For I knew my fear had changed and was on the verge of reappearing in another shape. It did so continually. I could never grasp it, and throw it, and hold it still. It turned, and twisted,

and slipped out of my fingers continually, a new and different thing. Thank God, it came only rarely, spasmodically—and disappeared again.

There was a time—it seemed already a long way past—when I lived in perfect peace and security in the Universe God had revealed to us. Its two parts stretched together in perfect harmony and reasonableness—the Heaven that the women sang of, with its angels and seraphim and golden streets, as clear and certain as the Earth itself. All this was a part of accepted knowledge before that day when my fear first came.

I can remember it as if it were yesterday. It was a rainy afternoon,—in the attic. I was not very old, yet not a little child—old enough to read quite well, I remember.

The rain drummed upon the roof. A pale slate-colored light shone through the thick glass skylight, and died into darkness under the eaves. There was the warm, dry, pungent smell of the place, the perfect silence, broken very rarely by the faintest creaking in the rafters or the flooring. And everywhere were things hanging from the sloping roof—dark, limp objects hanging in the half light.

The stairway, the one entrance to the attic, was at one side. In the center was a great chimney, and, as you walked out around it, there was no exit on the other side—merely a blind end,

quite black under the eaves. You felt there sometimes that some one, coming from behind, might possibly touch you, very softly, on the flesh. And you must run, if you could; if you were not trapped —blindly, around the chimney, to the only entrance.

I stood there, searching for something—just what I have forgotten long ago—when my eyes fell upon the clothing hanging from the roof. Odd, grotesque, it always seemed to me—the queer-shaped, discarded fancies of a generation that was gone. I had seen it hanging there, with a sense of half wonder and half amusement, all my life.

My eyes passed over it again—the rows, the groups, the little squads of empty clothing on the nails. There was a gay little bonnet quite near me, and a curious little silken wrap—beaded and scalloped. Beyond it a little way hung a suit of men's clothing—gray clothes, of thin cloth. They hung straight down, limp and long, in folds which had fixed themselves in the fabric. It was the clothing of a tall man. It was my dead father's. Yes, that was it! And the gay little bonnet must have belonged to my dead mother!

I stopped, still staring. For all at once the thought came over me:

"They were living people once—alive—in that clothing! Here in this house, as I am now!

"Yes," I said, answering myself, in vague discomfort, not yet fear.

Without a second's wait, that fear rushed on me then.

"Where are they?" it asked. "Where are they now?"

It was a clear, sharp, peremptory question—almost as if a voice had spoken in that silence. My fear had overtaken me—that fear that never again in all my life was entirely to leave me.

I was not a little child; I was old enough to have some personal dignity to defend in face of danger. But this thing was a panic—a cry to run. The perspiration started on my forehead. I held myself from leaping forward by main force, but I went at once—stiffly, rigidly—from the blind end of the attic, past the limply hanging clothes, around the chimney, under the pale blue skylight—and out at last, and down the stairs.

After I had gone downstairs, I sat upon a little tufted ottoman I used to have in my grandmother's room. I was alone in the house; for some reason, every one was out. And, as I rested there, half relieved and half ashamed, the question came at once again, peremptory and sharp, just where it had been dropped before.

"Well, where are they?"

"In Heaven," I repeated promptly—according

ot my life-long knowledge. "It says so in the Bible—time and time again."

"Does it? Where does it say so?" It was like the voice of another being speaking to me, that question—like Martin Luther's Adversary, exactly, as I had read of him in some book.

"Everywhere," I said, answering.

"That's no answer!" said my Adversary.

My pulse raced at this a little, for I did not remember immediately what the Bible said. I rose abruptly, and took up my grandmother's Bible. And, as I did so, almost by inspiration I thought of the text Mr. Griswold read so often—the revelation of the Holy City which John saw in his vision on the Isle of Patmos. I turned to it at once, for I knew it was almost the last thing in the Bible; and, in the space of a few seconds, I was whispering over to myself the verses that I half knew by heart already:

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

"And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying: Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his

people, and God himself will be with them, and be their God.

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death——"

I stopped, looking far away. Oh, what relief! A great surge of emotion passed over me. There it was, plainly, not to be denied—in the Bible itself. The Heaven of my earliest childhood, the Heaven of which I heard the women sing, came back to me again, as clear and real as ever. I raised my eyes instinctively toward the sky where it was. How good, how wonderful, that God had definitely revealed this to us!

And yet—even then, I knew that fear was not gone entirely. It stood aside, just a little aside—that was all. The world had become, on that rainy afternoon, a different place, somehow—less stable, less secure.

It came—that fear of mine—after that, not often, but most unexpectedly, on strange occasions, in lonely places, at night, at twilight,—at times when the animation of the living world seemed suspended,—a sudden, irresponsible depression. I never knew just when it would come over me. The oddest hints would call it out.

I remember our doctor—they said he was an atheist. I can't just describe my feeling toward him. He was a very educated man, very kind and

always joking. There was always a strange glint of mirth and knowledge in his eyes. Somehow I always thought of Mephistopheles, later when I heard of him, as like our doctor. Always smiling, with a knowledge of good and evil in his eyes. And always when I met him on the street, I had a touch of that fear in mine—that curious depression.

But, every time it came, I could conquer it and dismiss it then. I knew my authorities by heart; I knew now many passages in the Bible that bore upon it. And I drew them up before me, whenever that questioning came. The Bible stood always there before me—a solid barrier holding back a dark, immeasurable sea.

So it was not until that year of the Great Crisis for the Earth that this fear came upon me again very strongly—the year that Mr. Griswold and the others talked so continuously and so vehemently of Hell. Mr. Means, the missionary, was in the village all that summer. I heard him and Mr. Griswold often at my grandfather's. While I heard them arguing, discomfort grew upon me. Then, one day, it was no longer discomfort. I knew that fear was roused again.

"Let us not mince phrases," said Mr. Griswold loudly (they were discussing an article in the *Congregationalist*. "They are to-day attacking the whole doctrine of the Hereafter. They can not attack one part of the divine scheme of sal-

vation without the other. There is exactly the same authority for Hell as there is for Heaven."

"Exactly," said Mr. Means. "They are abolishing the Hereafter, one part with the other."

"If this world were all, without hope of punishment or salvation," said Mr. Griswold, "how could there be Christianity at all?"

"There could not be," said Mr. Means.

My heart sank as I heard them—in a way that I knew well now. My old fear was on me again—but in a very different form—as I first heard of these attacks. They were attacking the Hereafter—the very Bible itself. And, from that time on, I listened carefully to that discussion—openly, if possible; if not, secretly, behind doors.

It was secret, this fear of mine, always. We in that day were not encouraged to give confidences to our elders. And, in this case, it would have been impossible. They, I felt, had no fears of this kind. They lived as certain of Heaven as of the Earth, and went forward confidently from one division to the other of the Universe which God had revealed to us,—of which Mr. Griswold preached in the White Church. It seemed to me very clear that this fear of mine was a strange, unnatural thing, peculiar to myself—a shameful personal weakness. I took care that there was not a human being who knew of it—excepting, finally,

Celeste Griswold. But not she, either, for a long time.

But, shameful as it was, I could not overcome my old depression in that year when they were attacking the Bible. I listened days and weeks for what the old clergyman and missionary had to say. It was Mr. Griswold's confidence that finally reassured me. Steadily and without changing, he held to the exact and literal inspiration of the Bible by God against its enemies.

"That book," I heard him say one day to President Mercer of the Christian College, "that book is your foundation."

He struck the great Bible on our center table violently with his open hand.

"Take it away, and you have nothing left."

"There can be no doubt of it—generally speaking," said the president of the Christian College.

"It is the bulwark of the ages," said Mr. Griswold. "These men who are tampering with it now, undermining, picking it to pieces—we may laugh at them! Let them try—let them go on! Thy will have their trouble for their pains. They will pass, and there will still remain, exactly where it stood, the Everlasting Gospel in its entirety. It is an immovable rock upon which this Church of two thousand years has found and must always find its foundation."

My spirit leaped to hear him. It was a day

of great relief to me. For my doubt, in its new form, was crushed by what he said. The Bible was true, certainly, exactly as it was written. Otherwise Christianity would fall. And certainly no one claimed that—no one of consequence. A flood of happy and relieved emotion followed my great suspense.

It was an added sense of security to me, almost like that of my earliest childish days, when I joined the Church. I might myself be guilty of that peculiar weakness—that never-resting fear. But behind me was the Church, the great Christian Church, embracing or soon to embrace all mankind—thousands and tens of thousands and millions of older men who believed, and who knew that what they believed was true. Each Sunday I could imagine them gathering, in decent Sunday garb, into white churches over the entire world.

And yet, that old fear, that sense of insecurity, was not gone entirely. It came again at odd intervals, at peculiar hints.

They taught in school, I remember, that there were nearly two billion people in the world. For some reason, that knowledge depressed me heavily for several days.

"Two billion souls," I said to Celeste Griswold. "Think of it!"

"Why?" she asked me, looking up.

"Doesn't it seem awful to you, somehow? I can't quite explain it."

"Well, yes, it does," she said slowly, after a little.

"Billions," I said. "And billions and billions before that!"

"How strange you are, Calvin," she said, looking into my eyes with that puzzled, direct glance, which I remember so clearly of her. "Why do you always have to think up such things?"

But it was not so very often, after all, that I had these thoughts then, and they were rarely acute and pressing—except at special and unusual times.

The vehemence of the time of the Great Crisis of the Earth subsided; the strange theories of the Women who Smile and their Secret Book succeeded—to perplex and worry me not a little. And there were many other things, many changes that I saw in the world of my elders. There was a lessening sense of security, somehow, and a feeling that perhaps my elders were themselves touched sometimes by that fear of mine.

But now, that night my grandmother was dead, the fear was on me again, as it had never been before.

I was alone in the white guest-chamber in the Griswolds' house that night. Celeste had come to get me from our house, while Mr. Griswold stopped there for the night with my grandfather.

And now, after the long, slow evening, I was alone —turning and turning that day's disaster in my mind.

A sinister and unbreakable oppression was upon me, and the sense of the unreality, the impossibility of the thing that had happened. The feeling grew upon me; I encouraged it. No, it had not happened! My grandmother was not dead! I had almost lost myself; I was all but asleep! Suddenly I was awake again, my mind as clear and alert as a hawk's eye. My fear was on me again in a new form. I thought of my grandmother's body, alone in the great bed beneath the grim steel engraving of the crucifixion.

"Where is she?" said my fear, returning, as always, to the point where I had left it. "Where is she now, if you know!"

I started and sat upright in the bed, gasping.

"In Heaven," I said again, perfunctorily. And, as I said it, I knew that it was useless. It sounded insincere and hollow.

"None of that!" said my Adversary roughly. "You'll go that road yourself sometime. If you should go to-night, would you expect to pass to that strange place above you in the sky—those jeweled towns and glassy seas?"

"Men all the world around, much wiser than I am, all believe it," I answered.

And, as I said this to myself, there rose in-

voluntarily before me the picture of that afternoon—of my grandfather and the two women. I heard Miss Avery's voice again, saying: "It is nothing; It is Error. Nothing has happened here"; and saw again the expression upon my grandfather's face.

A new understanding flashed across me. I knew all at once that it was all confusion and change in the world of older people—so many beliefs where formerly there had been one; complexity in place of the old simplicity, everywhere.

"But what is your belief—your own?" demanded my fear. "That's the question."

I could not think for a minute; I was numb.

There was a brass candlestick on the white mantelpiece—a small brass shepherdess within a fence of glass prisms. The light from the street lamp caught upon one of these. My eye fixed itself upon that little, brilliant point of light. It was still everywhere—almost magically still.

I tried to answer; I tried to think, to revive my earlier, surer visions of the Heaven of which I heard the women sing, of which my grandmother had taught me. They sang those songs of Heaven seldom now on the street of white houses. My grandmother was gone, with a different faith than that one she had taught to me. And my own imagination of Heaven had faded. I tried in vain to revive the old images in my mind. The Heaven

of my childhood was gone, and never after that time did it seem conceivable to me.

But that effort of my memory reminded me of the Bible; of that text of Mr. Griswold's concerning the Celestial City that I read the first time that my fear had come to me. I rose at once, and took the guest-room Bible from where it lay upon the table by the bed. I carried it to the window—to the light from the street lamp beneath, and turned again to the last pages of the book, to the Vision of the Holy City that came down upon the earth. I read it all again as I had before—the passing of the sea, the brilliant and detailed inventory of the city that lieth four-square.

It seemed unreal.

"Surely," said my Adversary, "you can't believe that as it stands."

I sat cramped and cold, leaning the book toward the street light. And finally I stopped reading it, in trouble and depression. It meant absolutely nothing to me—nothing that was real!

I went back to bed again. I was cold, much colder than the summer night warranted. And I lay alone, as I always had before, and fought my fear in its new and triumphant form.

Two o'clock came, and three. There were occasional stirrings. Once Mrs. Griswold had one of her paroxysms of coughing. I heard Celeste mov-

ing about, helping her, in her room. But mostly silence—broken by the hissing of the arc-light on the street.

But then, at last, it came to me. It was nearly four o'clock, I remember; the first drowsy robins were waking in the trees.

"Whatever it may mean, it must mean something spiritual," I said to myself.

"Yes, yes," said my soul, with sudden great delight.

"We are spirits," I went on reasoning. "No one can deny that."

"No," said my Adversary grudgingly.

"And God is spirit, isn't he? That is certain, too. There is certainly no doubt of that."

"No, there is none," my fear admitted.

I had found my answer at last. I passed my eye carefully back and forth over the whole thing, over my new defenses. They were all sound and flawless. The Bible, that great barrier, still stood between me and my fear—a perfect protection still, although I had not understood it. And again a great wave of happy emotion came over me, as it always did when I had found my defense. My childish Heaven had gone forever; but a new and better one was come in its place. And I raised my eyes, as my grandmother had taught me when a little child, but to a new Heaven, filled with the great mystery of the spiritual presence of

almighty God. A sense of relaxation and security followed. I fell into a deep, unbroken sleep.

For many years this new Heaven was to remain with me. I spoke of it very little to any one. It was not a matter one spoke of easily. But on that morning, under the impulse of my great emotion, I did express my new ideas to Celeste Griswold.

"I have always thought of it in that way," she said.

I remember just where we stood. It was in the old-fashioned garden behind their house. It was still early morning. The sun was bright. A clear blue sky rose back of the white houses of the Street.

I was about to go back again to our own house; but, before I did so, I felt that I ought to thank Celeste Griswold for all that she had done—that they had all done for me—at that awful time. But I did not know just how to begin.

"Thank you, Celeste—for—everything," I blurted out finally, and shooks hands with her violently. Then I turned and hurried back to our house.

My new understanding of religion seemed very sure and real to me then. And yet, even then, that fear was not out of the world entirely. It still came upon me now and then, and still at curious hints.

There was George Eliot, for example. I could

not have explained exactly, if I had been asked, the strange effect the thought of her had upon me. I read a great deal more now. At home, the secretary, with its books founded upon Bible facts, was still practically all the library that we had. But I rarely opened its glass doors. We had our books from the circulating library now, both Celeste and I. We had long ago come into fiction by the common way of "Ivanhoe." And we had read several of the novels of George Eliot before Mr. Griswold and my grandfather noticed and stopped it.

"What, reading that woman's books?" said my grandfather. "I guess you can be in better business!" and took the novel away from me.

Then there was a sermon by a visiting clergyman, I remember very well, upon "The Sad Lesson of George Eliot's End." How could a person so brilliant, so wonderful in intellect, willingly deny the truths that made life worth living? Not for pleasure or bravado, but in sadness and regret! How could she die denying the well known historical facts of the resurrection of Christ?

I did not dwell upon this thought. There were suggestions there, chances for speculation, which troubled me. I stifled it as thoroughly as I could. For now I understood a new thing about this

fear of mine. It was not only irresponsible; it was changing its form continually as it recurred.

I seemed to see changes everywhere now. I could not help but notice those which were coming upon Mr. Griswold and the old White Church.

We sat again, I remember, the first year I was in the Christian College, in my grandfather's sitting-room—exactly the same group as on that day I remembered so well, in the year of the Great Crisis of the Earth—all except Mr. Means.

"I see that Mr. Means is dead," said my grandfather.

"I had not heard," said President Mercer, inclining his head politely.

"It was in the last *Congregationalist,*" said my grandfather.

"He is dead—in Marobi of Nephalobia," said Mr. Griswold. "Dead——"

His speech was interrupted. The trolley car thumped and jarred by our house upon its ill-laid rails. They had put them down on the street that year for the first time.

"Dead—in the thick of the battle," continued Mr. Griswold's sonorous voice, when it had passed. "A soldier of the Most High God."

"He was a strong, energetic figure," said President Mercer.

"There are not many of them left," my grandfather remarked.

"No," said Mr. Griswold and stopped—thinking.

"In his last years I believe he was greatly troubled by these new tendencies in the church," said President Mercer.

"Yes," said Mr. Griswold; "and well he may have been!"

Then there was silence.

"I am anxious to ask you, Mr. Mercer," Mr. Griswold went on, "what has been your observation in the field? What are the signs upon the horizon in our missions?"

The year before, President Mercer, not being well, had traveled in Palestine, and visited the missionary churches in Asia Minor.

"There is advance, I think," said President Mercer, "but slow."

"Slow," said Mr. Griswold, his voice rising. "How could it be otherwise in this time? How can we expect our missionaries to fight the battles of our faith in the mission field, with these sappers and miners at work continually in their rear—digging and undermining at the Gospel day and night?"

"I sometimes think we take too serious a view of it," said President Mercer very quietly.

Mr. Griswold did not answer; but very soon he asked another question of an entirely different kind.

"I want to ask you," said Mr. Griswold. "This Darwinism—this theory—is it not the fact that it has had a good deal of a setback at the hands of scientists lately?"

He asked his question with sudden eagerness, his eyes shining under his thick eyebrows.

"I was not aware of it," said Mr. Mercer; "not especially."

His manner was a little different with Mr. Griswold than it had been. A gap seemed to have widened perceptibly between them.

Mr. Griswold's face showed obvious disappointment.

"I had so understood from what I read," he said.

"There are many of its hypotheses still to be confirmed," said President Mercer.

"Do you teach it in your institution?" asked Mr. Griswold aggressively.

"To a limited extent we do," answered President Mercer with dignity.

"It is a mistake," said Mr. Griswold sternly, "and you will live to see it. The theory is false; untenable. I venture to believe that in ten years it will be utterly exploded. In the meanwhile, there is nothing so unsettling to belief—especially in the young—that has appeared in our time."

"Not that," said President Mercer. "Not that. We must not excite ourselves unnecessarily,

Mr. Griswold. There is nothing essential, in my opinion, that cannot be reconciled with Christianity."

The bright color of excitement grew on Mr. Griswold's pale face.

"Are we all becoming blind?" he said in a tremendous voice. "Can't any of us see where they are tending? In the last ten years there has been a general advance against the Bible. They have torn the Old Testament to pieces in the public print. They are advancing against the New. I tell you, if you do not take care, in a few years now they will be at your very citadel—at the Resurrection itself."

He stood up. His hands trembled; there were great drops of perspiration upon his forehead. And I noticed with surprise that he was out of breath. Very soon afterward he excused himself and went home.

"I would rather see my boy, if I had one, dead before me," said Mr. Griswold, going, "than taught this thing."

There was a little silence after his departure. To me his outbreak had been most impressive, and, to tell the truth, a little startling. The Resurrection, that historical fact, in danger! Grown boy as I was, my heart sank momentarily as he said it. There seemed no end to the changes that were going on around me.

"He holds to the old beliefs as fiercely as he ever did," said President Mercer.

"Yes," my grandfather answered.

"A lonely figure," said Mr. Mercer.

"Yes," said my grandfather, again.

"The last of his kind; I don't know any one else quite like him."

"They are nearly all gone," said my grandfather.

"And he himself looks much older now," remarked President Mercer.

"We are none of us getting younger," responded my grandfather.

Their conversation jolted hesitantly along. They both seemed to be thinking. They did seem older—all of them.

"Is his church somewhat declining?" asked the college president finally.

"Yes," answered my grandfather.

"I am sorry for him," said President Mercer.

"I am," said my grandfather. "Mr. Griswold is not a great preacher; but he is a very upright man. I like him the best of any minister I ever knew. You could always tie to him."

"And his church—will it remain self-supporting?"

"We hope so," said my grandfather—and stopped a moment. "I would hate to see it go. My father went there," said my grandfather,

" and his father's father." His voice rose a little as he said it.

The trolley car, coming back from the village, bumped and sizzled by again.

" I understand," said President Mercer. " Well, it will no doubt eventuate for the best. But for Mr. Griswold I am truly sorry. He can not seem to adapt himself to the times."

" No," said my grandfather.

" We can not escape it," said President Mercer. " The times change; and we change with them."

" Yes," assented my grandfather.

" In the light of modern research, we can not do otherwise," said President Mercer. " But men like him are unnecessarily alarmed. If modern science seems at times to take away, it also often adds. And many of the discoveries of our archæologists in the East strengthen in a decided way the contentions of our Bible scholars."

" I see," my grandfather said.

" But of one thing we may be sure," said President Mercer. " They will never, under any circumstances, invalidate the certainty of the Resurrection. It is as strong to-day as it was twenty years ago."

He was right. I felt it. And my familiar emotion of glad security swept back again, to cover the recession of my spirits which had come to me during the discussion.

And yet, after all, there was a certain feeling of regret, of insecurity, of apprehension. After all, I remembered them when they all seemed so much younger and more vigorous. There was still that feeling of change—and change, too, I seemed to feel, always in one direction.

It was two or three years then, before my old fear came back to me again so strongly. I was at college, in new surroundings, with new ambitions—away from the atmosphere of the old white Street and its Church.

The old disquiet came over me at times, of course—still at queer hints. And then, in my junior year it came again, suddenly, fiercely, from a very odd suggestion.

I was reading that night Lubbock's book on ants—their domestic animals, their harvests, their slaves; their battles and their bridges; their tribes and towns and states. A wonderful, unmerciful book. My eyes held to it, fascinated. And, as I read, a great depression fastened itself upon me. I recognized it at once. I read on until I came to one of the book's rare comments.

"Thus there seem to be three principal types," the text read, "offering a curious analogy to the three great phases—the hunting, pastoral, and agricultural stages in the history of human development."

I dropped the book. It was late at night—the

chimes were striking a quarter hour in the tower of the chapel. And I faced myself once more to my old Adversary.

Insects—myriads inconceivable! What were the few billions of the human race who had come and passed upon the earth to these innumerable, manlike intelligences inhabiting the grass? Intelligences—yes; undoubtedly. Then why not souls?

"Yes," said my fear; "why not? Souls just as real as yours."

It was back again in its full vigor—that old fear. No; started with a tenfold vigor, from its long neglect.

It was late winter. I was tired, stuffy from indoor life, cramped from my lack of exercise. I broke out, when I could, for hunting in the mountains—shooting the white hares that lived at the top of the hills.

You climbed upon snow-shoes up to the spruce woods, a black crown upon the summit. It was wonderfully still when you passed in there. All sounds fell dead, muffled; your voice, even the explosion of your gun—one dull report, that was all. The black foliage and the snow muted everything. It was like a chamber hung with black, heavy tapestry against all the world—that distant world of living men far down the mountain-side.

The hound in the hard woods, outside the

spruces, went following the great circle of the running of the hare. You heard his baying disconnectedly—soft, gone in the hollows, passing away; then louder, a little louder as he turned toward you—but always muted, dull, unreal.

I remember how I stood there, that late winter afternoon, in that little break in the spruce woods. The dead trees were down behind me, blown in a tangled mat of trunks and brush, like corn lodged by the wind. The semi-arctic wind whispered in the black branches—a faint, intermittent touch—and died. The voice of the dog sounded, far away. And suddenly the hare, absolutely noiseless upon its soft feet, like a quick white ghost, just visible, went flitting by across the blue-white snow.

I fired. I got the thing. It leaped, fell straight, crumpled,—a loose, warm mass of fur upon the snow—and died. That crumpled thing and I were alone in the darkening clearing of the black spruce.

I stood there absolutely still. The sound of the shot was dead as soon as it was fired. The wind lisped in the spruce trees and failed. There was nothing new—except that small warm ball of fur upon the snow. And yet, the world had changed around me. There was a new heaven, and a new earth. For my fear had leaped back upon me as it had never yet since that first time it had overtaken me in the attic.

There was a new world, without pity, or re-

morse, or interest—a million, million creatures passing shrieking on their way to the indifference of death. And I with them. There was no escape.

"But you are exempt from this," my doubt said sneeringly, "by special revelation of immortality."

"I believe I am," I tried to say.

"A special revelation," said my Adversary, "testified to by unlettered Asiatic peasants two thousand ago."

"It is amply verified," I said, and quickly shut off the discussion.

It was already growing dusk; the circle of the spruces showed their spires against the old blue sky of the cloudy winter evening. I took the other cartridge from my gun, caught up the warm hare by its legs, and hurried down the mountain-side.

But the issue was alive now; I could not beat it down. It was not always fear. I had thrown myself upon the thing with the energy of twenty—the time when you still have faith that you can find the Absolute, that there is an Absolute, of beauty, of courage, of right or wrong. If it had been nothing else but a search for this,—entirely aside from fear or hope,—it would still have been an obsession with me. But it was more: it was the thing of greatest consequence in all the world.

I ranged my old defenses out before me once again. I tried to see again that old Celestial City of the vision of St. John. It was all beautiful

—a promise—very beautiful still to the ear. But what did it mean? Did I honestly, fairly place the slightest confidence in such revelations when the times came which tested my belief?

"No. But still the Resurrection stands—a historical fact," I said doggedly.

"Does it?" said my fear.

I flung myself, in the crude way of a boy, upon my problem. I had no help of consequence. It had been my habit always to meet these thoughts alone.

I was at home that Easter vacation, and several times I met Mr. Griswold upon the street. He seemed changed to me, leaner, whiter, and not so strong. A strange, old, anxious figure, driving up and down the Street, in a shining old frock-coat. He spoke to me several times, in passing, of the Christian College. He had been a graduate there himself.

"They are still teaching you this Darwinism, I presume," he said.

"Yes," I answered.

"And you accept it, I presume," he said.

"Why, yes," I said, with some concern. But he passed by me without further comment.

I met him once again, upon the Street.

"I am told," he said, stopping me, "that several times, of late, the pulpit of the college church has been occupied by Unitarians—men who openly

profess their disbelief in the Resurrection, who state openly that the whole Bible is a myth, the history of Christ a pretty fairy tale. How can they allow this thing? How can they? Are they working to destroy the faith that created the institution?"

His unrest was so violent, so continual, so disquieting to me. The Resurrection a fairy tale—folk-lore! The very sight of the old man accelerated the fever that was working in myself.

I read and read, doggedly—encouraged, discouraged; gaining, losing; working more and more feverishly. For now I thought I saw another characteristic of this fear of mine. Never once had I ever held it back. Steadily, from my first childhood, it had always gained and gained upon me. And yet, I said, making my last stand: "Christianity, that greatest of human institutions, that structure of twenty centuries untrue! Impossible; incredible."

I dwelt especially, of course, upon that familiar story of the New Testament—the story of that wonderful white figure to which, from earliest consciousness, my best emotions had been directed. I read with confidence first, almost certainty. But gradually I lost it. Piece after piece, it crumbled under my fingers as I caught at it. Try as I might, I could not believe the miraculous story—the

revelation of the Chief of Miracles—as history. I knew, at last. The great barrier of the Bible, thinning and thinning, year after year, had gone down utterly before me. And my fear was now upon me in its final form, overwhelming me.

The recognition of the fact came to me, finally, in a sudden flash. I was going home from college at the end of my junior year. The train was late. I failed to make my last connection at the little junction point—and I sat there through the night in that sordid little station. Seats with smooth iron arms and greasy backs. A faintly burning oil lamp before a specked glass reflector threw a half-light over the dark place.

The great freight engines went crashing by, across the switches, their driving wheels level with my eyes—great, sinister creatures dragging their long, rattling loads behind them.

Two men in smutty overalls, faces smudged, hands brown with grease, came in, lighted their black pipes, and sat there, their tin lunch-pails beside them.

"Number seventeen just got Jim Dorgan up the line," said one of them.

"So they was tellin' me."

"They're bringing him along down now."

There was a silence. "So Jim got his?" said the other one, at last. "Too bad. What will become of the kids?"

"I dunno," said the first man, and spat upon the floor.

The dirty station was a trap, a prison. I rose and walked out to the door. For I knew now—not only knew, but understood. My last barrier was gone.

Outside it was an overcast summer night. A round high hill lay black against the sky. Along its base there was the hushed sound of a little river. And between it and me a small flat meadow—a faint, light green plain, with the fire-flies weaving in and out above it. Far up the road, the hollow whistle of an engine.

It was all gone—all the foundation of my old Universe, the teaching of those earlier days.

No, not all. I raised my eyes instinctively, by habit bred into my last fiber, to the sky above me. And a great peace came over me again. I was nothing. I would pass, vanish, and be forgotten. But God was still there, immutable, eternal.

Tears came into my eyes; and my lips formed, almost unconsciously, in the long familiar words:

"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

CHAPTER VI

THE GOD OF MY FATHERS

IT was the middle of the morning when I came through the Street of white houses—Sunday morning. The church bell was ringing, loud on the general silence. Mr. Tubbs, the organist, was on the Street, walking slowly toward the church, coming from the village, a Sunday paper in his hand.

"Well, how are you?" asked Mr. Tubbs, giving me his fat hand. "Glad to see you."

"Fine," I said. "How is everything here at home?"

"Always just the same," said Mr. Tubbs. "Just as you see it; just as you see it now."

The same! Could anything have changed more? It was all changed, all shrunken. These little houses with the white pillars, that little box of a church, were the White Street and the great White Church of my childhood!

"Say," Mr. Tubbs called after me, "you'll be getting through college next year, won't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, I got something I want to talk to you

about sometime," said Mr. Tubbs mysteriously, and passed along.

Shrunken! The place was not only shrunken, but strange to me—this quiet little place, this old New England Sabbath, this strange world-old rite of the seventh day. The church-going folk in their stiff, decent clothes were starting out upon the Street, moving slowly toward the White Church. I saw, from down the Street, Miss Avery in her pink dress, opening the door for one of the congregation of the Women who Smiled. It came across me, in a flash, what a queer corner of the world I had sprung from. How singular that I had never seen it so before!

And just as I went by the Griswolds' house, hurrying,—for I must get to church myself,—the door opened, and out came Celeste, immaculate, with that sense of freshness and cleanliness that always marked her.

We were both a little surprised, I think.

"Hello, Celeste," I said, dropping my valise upon the walk. Instinctively I held out both my hands to her. Instinctively she gave me both of hers.

She was a woman grown. It seemed very strange to me.

I am quite a tall man, much taller than most women; but her eyes were nearly on a level with my own. They looked at me again with that same

old straight, frank, fearless expression—just for the fraction of a second. Then she dropped my hands as suddenly as she had taken them.

"Gee, I am glad to see you, Celeste," I said.

I don't think that she answered anything.

But there had come to me, when my eyes met hers, that old sense of friendliness and staunchness and comradeship. How many people, after all, have we in our lives whose eyes we can meet frankly, confidently, without some few withdrawals or reticences? One—or two? Not three—impossible!

"You'd better hurry," Celeste Griswold was saying, "or you'll be late for church." It seemed to me her voice was a little low and unsteady.

I hurried. My grandfather was just going out when I reached the house. But I followed him at once. And there, again, I was in our pew in the old White Church in time for divine service—my grandfather still sitting by the door.

It still seemed very old and odd to me. The little organ sounded tremulous and scratchy in the hymns; the voices of the congregation weak and diffident and old. And over the arch of the pulpit a faint line of discoloration—a trickle of yellow water-stain, apparently from some slight leak in the roof—reached down and almost touched the old inscription in the Gothic letters:

This is None Other but the House of God

Sometimes, very often now, I was rebellious during services at church. To sit in silence, held in unanswering submission to statements you thought to be untrue—not only untrue; far worse, banal! It was too much. But it was not so now. I heard again, with wistful kindness and regret, the voice of Mr. Griswold giving his old-fashioned discourse in the old church of my childhood.

He preached, as I had often heard him preach before, on the many mercies of the God of the Covenant, using this time the text of Deuteronomy:

"For the Lord thy God is a merciful God; He will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers, which He sware unto them."

The covenant of thy fathers! It was a call to emotion, not debate. Across the old half empty church, I saw, in my imagination, all those kindly, earnest people who had worshiped there—our fathers carrying out the covenant of their fathers with Jehovah, the Most High God.

Mr. Griswold came down and spoke to me warmly at the closing of the service. He seemed still more changed to me. His skull showed more plainly than ever through the flesh of his thin face. There was perspiration on his forehead, and I saw, with much surprise, that he was panting.

"Yes, that was right," said my grandfather on our way home. "He spends himself entirely on Sunday services. He lies in bed all day long on Monday. He is wearing himself out."

The afternoon of the next day I went in to see Celeste Griswold. She received me in her father's study—that old library of the theologian. I looked around it again—the brown-backed books, the prints of sacred ruins on the walls. How it, too, had shrunk from that old, awful sanctuary of supernatural knowledge of my boyhood!

Celeste, I thought, was rather grave and pale. It certainly seemed strange to me to think of her as a grown woman; a tall, slight woman, with vigorous russet hair and a skin very pale and clear.

I had not thought, at first, to speak to her of what chiefly held my mind—that destruction of my old world. But it was not long before I found myself telling her.

"Calvin," she said, and her voice rang with a sharp undertone of pain, "it can't have gone as far as that." For she knew already something of my reading—I had written her.

"Yes."

"Oh, why must you always hunt and hunt for trouble?" said Celeste.

"Do I, Celeste?" I asked her. "I don't feel that I do."

She looked at me steadily, curiously, with that attitude of judgment, of kindly appraisal, that women often give to men.

"Yes," she said, "you always did. How can you say you don't believe, when all these men —these thousands of men who have given their lives to studying it—prove it all to their entire satisfaction? The men, for instance, who have written all these books."

She motioned with her long hand toward the book-shelves—the brown, level lines of the treatises of the dead Doctors of Divinity about the walls.

"They're all obsolete," I said, without thinking it might hurt her—"every one of them. This library—all of it—is obsolete."

"That is not so," said Celeste, standing up suddenly.

"There is not a book here," I went on regardless—for we were very frank with each other, always,—"that has been written since 1865."

"Even so, what difference would that make?" she said warmly. "What are thirty years in all these thousands?"

"There is a new world in these thirty years," I said. "More changes than in all the time before since the days of the Pharaohs."

She was the same as she always had been—graver, a little pale, not so eagerly demonstrative,

but, once aroused, she burned with the same white fire.

I went back with her across the field of the debate. She had read many of the same books that I had in the past, but not that recent reading of mine. She readily agreed to take it up.

"I am not afraid," she said. "And I am not afraid for you, except for one thing—that you will be too hasty."

"I will not," I said. And I promised her, when she asked me, to go over the whole matter again.

"You will come to me, not I to you," said Celeste Griswold.

"You think that?" I asked.

"I do not think," said Celeste Griswold proudly. "I know! If Christianity were not true, why should we want to live?"

My spirits rose a little at her tense sincerity. After all, there certainly must be a God. At least "That power not ourselves" (I was reading Matthew Arnold) "that makes for righteousness."

The summer was before me; there was time enough. And so I took up again that old, cruel treadmill of my argument. But I did not regain my old ground; I fell away continually. Retreat—always and everywhere retreat!

I could see it now, as I looked back, clear back to my childhood—the steady and unhalted

gain of that fear of mine upon me, from one point to another, never going back. And now it came to me, just as clearly and certainly: that fear, that falling of the barriers which faith had thrown up against it, was just as constantly advancing everywhere about me—even in the quiet backwaters of the old Street.

I walked much in the hills that summer. I had been in and out of them always since I was old enough to hold a fishing-rod across the brooks. But now my unrest drove me in and out across the mountains, thinking sometimes, sometimes trying to forget.

I was far up one day—in a high mountain pasture—when a sudden thunderstorm rolled up, tremendous, white and blue, across the valley underneath. I stepped into an old black ruin of a haybarn—you find them still sometimes in these deserted hills. The warm, dry fragrance of the coarse hay enveloped me. I felt the grateful sensation of shelter in a bad storm.

Then, outside, in the steaming summer rain, I saw a figure coming, a great figure, pounding the grass-grown road, its clothes drenched to a glossy limpness. It was Mr. Griswold.

I started to call out to him. Then I stopped. He was talking to himself, smiting his big left palm with his clenched right hand. His eyes were absent, staring straight ahead.

"No, no," Mr. Griswold was saying. "Salvation. That's the only answer; the one solution. The one and only thing that makes it rational."

He passed by, striding down the storm, gesticulating.

Strange, I said to myself. Two of us—here! For I saw that exactly the same unrest that was obsessing me was driving him—seen in a different form. Continual change, never once turned back, still always gaining in the same direction.

I did not speak to Mr. Griswold of my own struggles. We were too far apart. Not only I, but his own daughter, saw that clearly.

"Yes, I understand, Calvin," she said, when I spoke of it. "You can't.

"Poor father!" she went on softly. "He seems rough and vigorous still. But he isn't well, not very. It seems as if he were never quiet. He doesn't sleep. He is just wearing himself out. And we can do nothing but sit and watch him."

I didn't discuss the reason with her. She knew I knew. It was his failing church, of course; the general agitation of his mind by those religious controversies.

"Have you read the books I've given you?" I asked Celeste Griswold several times. She had—one after another; but she would not comment on them.

"What do you think of them?" I asked her.

"I'd rather not talk of them, Calvin," she would say, "until I have read them all more thoroughly."

"You can't say that they are vindictive or malicious or bad-tempered, can you?" I insisted.

"Some of them are not," she said.

"They are as reverent and sincere in their way as the Bible is," I said warmly. I believed that thoroughly. That was the time of the New Reformation—you may remember: the rise of serious, determined figures in science and philosophy into the discussion of the Christian faith.

It was evening, I remember, the time we had that talk—summer evening, just after the lighting of the lamps. We sat alone in the old theological library. For several minutes neither of us spoke.

"I believe," said Celeste Griswold at last—her speech was dry and halting, as if it cost her a painful effort to frame the words—"I believe," she said, "there is one thing such men as these have never known." She stopped. "Never taken into account." She stopped again. The rhythmic droning of the August night throbbed through the pauses in her speech.

She sat part way across the room from me—a dim white figure on the border of the lamplight. There was sewing in her lap—she was never without work of some kind by her.

"I mean—the knowledge that real Christians

have," she said again. "It isn't reason, is it? We can't prove it. But, oh, Calvin! I don't think —I know! I have known ever since I was a little girl.

"I am very sorry, Calvin," she said finally, "that I can't express myself better. I talk so badly—with so much difficulty—on things like this. It is one way in which I miss the education that I hoped for." Her voice receded into silence.

There were deep reticences in her always—girl and woman; hidden, silent, personal shrines, whose lights showed from without only at the rare disturbance of some great emotion.

And what she said might easily be true. Indeed, the train of argument was already directing itself along those lines—in the more abstruse language of the psychologists—to the "subconscious self." The exploration was already well begun of that new, murky country of the instincts and emotions. No one, certainly, who thought, could deny the possibilities of this new field. It came to me, with another uprush of emotion, that here might possibly be a way out that I had not seen. I tried—and tried sincerely to sense again the atmosphere of religion. I even went in to the prayer meetings on Thursday nights.

How strange they seemed to me after all those years—that handful of aging people in the bare vestry; those sad-faced women in black; the bowed

octogenarian, with the rattling cough; the lean, set-faced man, with the brown beard upon his stringy neck—that man with the gift of prayer, who burst forth on every Thursday evening, after the long week's silence, in the rolling phrases of the Apocalypse; and Mrs. Judd, with her white blond hair and red eyes. They were old, all of them. There was but one young person there regularly besides Celeste Griswold and myself—the pale and diffident girl who played the cabinet organ.

I felt sure of one thing—I could not help it, as I watched them: I had not been alone in that old fear of mine. Death, the destroyer, the divider of souls—the fear of him, the blind hope to escape, was written obviously on too many of those faces.

I was welcomed very warmly, almost eagerly. Even Mr. Griswold's severe face seemed to lighten up a little when I came in.

"I am glad you went, if for nothing else. You will never know how much it meant to him," said Celeste.

But, after all, I saw that it made but little impression on me, that attendance of mine upon those prayer meetings. I could not doubt, at last, that it oppressed me. It started a most depressing train of thought.

I picked up, one day,—it was nearly at the end of my vacation,—an old text-book of mine upon the Greeks of the time of Aristophanes. My eye

droned down the dull pages till suddenly they stopped at a paragraph which read, as I remember it, about like this:

"The religion of the Greeks at this period was well on its decline. The masses of the population accepted it, it is true; but to the educated classes it was grotesque—already obsolescent. Nevertheless, they not only tolerated but supported it for its ceremonial and its disciplinary value upon the populace. The time was yet to come when Attic civilization, freed from the salutary influences exerted by religion, however false, would plunge down like an extinguished torch until it died entirely, at last, in the gross darkness of the Middle Ages."

Commonplace enough—a sentiment a thousand times repeated! But it cut into me suddenly like a knife.

The Universe of my childhood, the strange old cosmic theory of those Asiatic shepherds three thousand years ago; those gray and sturdy myths, with their roots far down in the foundation of human thought and speech; that wonderful but curious treasure-house of the spiritual emotions and precepts of dead peoples; the Scriptures; the White Church; the fine white flower of a spiritual, emotional race, so suited for the comfort and the discipline of the rough and brutal and uncultivated ages that succeeded it. But now—how strange!

how inconceivable! Was some great cycle in the history of man swung around again to the death of another religion? I shuddered when that thought came to me.

I attended one more prayer meeting before I went back again to college. It was the monthly missionary meeting. The tall, pale girl who played the cabinet organ read an annual review written on old-fashioned bluish-white note-paper.

"The past year has seen an advance, if not marked, yet noticeable in the field of foreign missions," she began.

I heard but little more. The imagination of the great reaches of the world untouched as yet by this especial faith came to me; the twenty centuries of hope and effort and endeavor for the saving of mankind. And here—in New England—its stronghold, this gathering!

Mr. Griswold spoke to me when I went out, expressing his approval for the first time since I had come there. I was going back to college next morning.

"We have been very glad to have you with us here, Calvin," said Mr. Griswold simply, and shook my hand.

I felt a quick regret at the falseness of my position.

He was stopping, after service, with one of his parishioners—an aged woman who caught his arm

continually, and held him to her anxious inquiries over the exact status of the soul in the hereafter.

Celeste Griswold and I walked out together, across the grass-plot to her house. It was a still summer evening. There was an orange after-light, barred with motionless blue clouds, behind the elm trees. A robin, disturbed, gave one last sharp cry in some tree-top. Then silence—rest.

"Oh, I can't, Celeste," I said at last—"I can't keep up this acting eternally. Sometime or other I must say what I believe. I must leave the church. It isn't right; it isn't honest for me to stay there."

"No," said Celeste. "Not yet, not yet!"

"Can't you see my position?" I asked. "You've read the books I gave you. Can't you see, can't you understand what I mean—a little?"

For I could never get her to discuss those books with me. She had read them all, I knew—sitting in her bedroom late at night, reading. I could see her lighted windows. It was the only time she had; she was busy all the day.

"I understand," she said quietly.

Then there was silence.

"But not yet, Calvin," said Celeste Griswold again, suddenly. "Not yet. You know how impetuous you are. Wait a little longer."

"How much longer?" I asked her.

"Not much, now," she said. "You will come back at last. Only wait. It can do no harm. Wait

—if for nothing else," she said finally, "but for the sake of my poor father. You can never know what this has meant to him, Calvin—what you have done this summer. Don't trouble him now."

Strange old man! I thought. He had scarcely said a word to me.

We were silent again.

"You are going in the morning," said Celeste Griswold.

"Yes," I answered.

She tried to speak several times, I think.

"You will come back to us, Calvin," she said at last, in a low, level voice. "I—shall pray for you. I shall pray—" she said—and stopped.

She was very pale—a tall figure in a white gown—rather old-fashioned. I liked her in those immaculate gowns she wore—and made herself. She was as fine as a tall flower in an old-fashioned garden.

"I shall pray," she said, and hesitated again, "a little—for myself."

And, as I looked at her in the darkening evening, a great sense of all that she had been to me—of her honesty, and cleanness, and high courage—swept over me.

"Celeste, God bless you," I said to her. "There has never been a time of weariness or trouble, in all my life, when you were not doing me some great kindness."

And suddenly, without thinking at all, I stooped and kissed her hand, and let it fall again. Never in all our lives together had I attempted such a thing before. Yet, curiously enough, we seemed not to notice it, either of us, as strange, or new, or unexpected. We stood exactly as we had stood before, silent, motionless.

"You are going in the morning," said Celeste Griswold huskily at last.

"Yes."

"Good-by."

Her white figure passed through the dusk—in through the doorway of the old white house.

CHAPTER VII

My Own People

I TURNED away at last—walked slowly back to our own house. I passed up the walk to the side door. And there, across the lawn, was Mr. Tubbs on his piazza, in his old rocking-chair. He usually sat there on pleasant evenings, moving stiffly back and forth like a fat rocking-horse, his hands on the chair-arms, his eyes looking straight out into the dark, his feet regularly *thump, thump, thumping* on the piazza floor.

He waved his fat hand at me as I went in our door.

"I'm going to see you some day about that thing I want to talk to you about," he called.

"All right," I said, and passed in.

My grandfather was in the sitting-room. How clearly I remember it, even now! How sharply it all sprang before me that day two months later—the day that my telegram came!

He sat stretched out in his green velvet easy-chair, beside his green-shaded lamp, reading his newspaper. As I came in he looked at me sharply over the rims of his reading-glasses.

"Been out to prayer meeting?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," I said.

If I had lived with him until middle age, I think I would never have answered him without the "sir"—that stiff New England symbol of respect drilled into me from babyhood. It was an essential part of our relation.

"Sit down," said my grandfather, and I knew that he wanted to talk with me.

I seated myself on one of the lean, slippery hair-cloth chairs.

"Your religion been bothering you?" asked my grandfather abruptly, laying his glasses upon the marble top of the center table.

It was an unexpected shock. He had never mentioned the subject before. He had given absolutely no sign of noticing my agitation over the decline of my faith. But now that he knew, I could expect only one outcome—trouble.

"Yes, sir," I said; "it has."

Whatever came must come. I could not deny what I believed or disbelieved.

"I thought so," said my grandfather.

I moved a little in my chair, not knowing what to say, or what to expect from him—but surely something serious.

"And so you went to prayer meeting," said my grandfather, "to see what they could offer you. That it?"

"Yes, sir," I said, wondering at the accuracy of his observation.

"Did you get any help out of it?"

"No, sir; I did not," I said—a little loudly, with a hastening of my pulse.

What would he do? He might stop my education when he knew; throw me upon my own resources; cut off my support entirely. I braced myself for what was coming.

"I see," said my grandfather, his black eyes fixed steadily on my face—and stopped there. And still I sat, waiting the strain of attack.

"I see," he repeated reflectively.

I looked up at the unexpected tone of his voice.

"Well, I used to go a good deal," he said, "when your grandmother was alive—before she took up that new religion. But lately I've kind of given it up."

"Yes, sir, I've noticed," I replied—and waited. I was puzzled by the trend of his talk.

"So you've lost your religion?" said my grandfather, "and they can't give it back to you again?"

"No, sir," I said, my tongue loosened by his unexpected tolerance. "I've tried as hard as I could. I've read; I've listened. I can't do it, sir—I can't believe it."

"You can't believe what?" he asked sharply. The storm had come!

"I can't believe—" I started.

"You can't believe what the ministers say," concluded my grandfather.

"No, sir; I can not."

"They *don't* know much about it," remarked my grandfather dryly; "do they?"

"No, sir," I managed to stammer; "I think not."

Never, I think, have I gone through so sudden a revulsion of feeling. My grandfather—the pillar of the White Church, that chief representative of the faith in a world of men!

"It seems strange," said my grandfather, half musing. "When I was a boy everything was church—Sundays and weekdays. Now they seem to be all drifting the other way. The whole thing seems to be kind of running down everywhere, don't it?"

"Yes, sir," I replied faintly, not yet certain of myself—that I understood him.

"I can remember," he said, "when the White Church was filled full Sunday after Sunday. Now they're trolley-riding, reading the Sunday papers on Sunday—anything but church. And the ministers can't get them back again.

"No, the ministers don't know much about it," my grandfather continued—and was silent, while I tried my best to readjust myself to my new situation.

I was in a new world. All at once, without the slightest ceremony, this silent superior of mine, this taskmaster and dictator of my childhood, had swung back the gate. I stood for the first time face to face with him, two equals in the world of older men, without reticence or fear or interposition of authority between us.

"You say your reading didn't get you any further?" my grandfather was asking me.

"No, sir; it led me the other way."

I looked up as I said it, straight into his eyes. They startled me. Never, before or since, have I seen quite such a look in a man's eyes—of hunger and eagerness. It focused just for a second on my eyes, and then was averted.

"I didn't know but what they might have found something, all these educated men—something you could really fasten to—a little," he said.

"If they have," I said, "I haven't seen it."

"No," said my grandfather in a dull voice. "No. I suppose it's too much to expect. But, you see, I'm not an educated man; I have to take what they tell me and think it over."

He had been asking my advice. Now he was apologizing—to me! I could not fully realize it.

"It is a good thing, I've found," he said finally, "to keep your mind busy—keep occupied. Then you don't get to thinking about it. That's what I find—as I get older."

Then, as if following his own advice, he changed the subject:

"Have you made up your mind what you want to do when you get out of college?" asked my grandfather, drawing himself up a little in his chair.

"Yes, sir," I answered, detaching my mind as best I could from the other train of thought. "I had intended lately—I had thought that I would take up biology or organic chemistry."

I had thought over it a good deal, as a matter of fact, in the last two weeks. It appealed to me at first in this way: after all, if we were to know anything about the matter that was worrying me so,—about that most wonderful and important of all things, life,—wouldn't the way be eventually to start at the beginning, and study, in the simplest, most direct way, what actual knowledge we had gained of it? Just what it is. Besides, I was naturally interested in biology. It seemed such a big thing, someway.

"Biology?" repeated my grandfather. "Something like doctoring. It might lead to that, I mean." He always took the practical view.

"Yes, sir," I said; "it might—very easily."

"I see," said my grandfather, and we lapsed into silence.

Finally he roused himself and sat straighter.

"There was something I wanted to say to you

to-night, before you go back to school," he said.

His voice was dry and level; but there was not a hitch or cough or hesitation that impeded it.

"Yes, sir," I said, waiting.

"They tell me I'm not so well as I was," said my grandfather. "They tell me I've got a heart trouble."

I felt cold and scared when he said it. He would never have spoken without some serious reason.

"Angina pectoris—they call it," said my grandfather. "I've had several spells of it this last year. They tell me it gets worse as time goes on."

"Oh, sir," I said, starting up, "I'm—I'm sorry! I hope——"

It was wicked—not a word more could I say. If I could only have taken his hand! If I could only have had some—any expression of my feeling! I hadn't one. All those years of silence and obedience, all that iron schooling of reticence, stood between us.

But the strangest thing of all was that I saw I had no name, even, to address him by. The first name that I had had, the childish "grandpa," had become impossible long before; "grandfather" I found stiff and unnatural. I really believe, by instinct, I would have done as my grandmother had done—called him "Mr. Morgan." But that, too, was impossible. For several years I

had avoided addressing him at all—by anything but the rigid "sir" to which he had always trained me.

My grandfather stood up.

"I thought you ought to know," he said.

"Yes, sir," I said awkwardly, following him and rising to my feet.

"If anything happens, of course, what I've got is yours," he went on crisply.

And even after that I could only stammer, confusion confounded with emotion, that I hoped and believed that it would be many years before it came to me.

We talked with great embarrassment; our eyes avoided each other's as we spoke.

"But you can't tell anything about what these doctors say," said my grandfather dryly. "They're wrong half the time."

"Well, I suppose I won't see you again," he added. For I would take the early morning train before he would be up again. "Good-by."

"Good-by, sir," I said.

We didn't as much as shake hands that night. It was awkwardness on both sides, I suppose; but principally withdrawal on his, I think, after his unusual confidences.

"By the way," said my grandfather, "that doctor of ours is a good fellow, I always thought —don't you?"

"Yes, I do," I said.

"If you decide to go into doctoring, or anything like that," said my grandfather, "I believe he'd be a good man for you to talk to and get better acquainted with. He's been a good friend of our family." And his sharp eyes dwelt on mine again as he said it.

"Yes, sir," I answered; "I will."

"You know, you haven't many relations."

"No, sir," I said, wishing I could say more—of the deep tie that bound us, the last two of our race. But, as it was, I said nothing, finally.

He went into the dining-room and lighted his kerosene lamp. In spite of the fact that he himself had brought the electric lights into the village, he still carried his old glass kerosene lamp to his bedroom. It was more economical.

"Good-by," said my grandfather again.

His figure went down the passageway with his lamp to his lonely bedchamber at the side of the dining-room. He was whiter than he had been; a little less smart and definite in his movements; his black beard was well grayed over now. But his eye was as black and keen and his carriage as self-confident and determined as it ever was. He passed on through the corridor without turning back. If I could only have stopped him—have said some little thing—given some little expression of what I felt. But I could not. I had no form to put it in. What dumb fools we are,

aren't we—we Anglo-Saxon men, in our emotions toward one another?

My grandfather closed his door. Outside, across the road from our silent house, I heard once more the slow, regular *thump, thump, thump* of Mr. Tubbs rocking upon his piazza.

I took the early train at two o'clock. And as I went up the street I looked up and saw a light in Celeste Griswold's bedroom, where I knew she still sat reading those books of mine. I thought with regret of the fever and unrest I had brought to her, of the trouble and pain I had caused her. But once the light from her room had left my eye, my mind was back again, ringing with the echoes of the sharp, crisp speech of my grandfather.

In those next few weeks I thought so many times of him, alone in the old house, with our one old deaf servant, facing by himself what might come to him at any time in one great flash of awful pain, without a tremor in those sharp eyes, without a sound, without faith—essentially as faithless as myself.

It was a grim and unpleasant picture. But in a way, too, it was clarifying and strengthening. Whatever happened, there was one asset you could reserve for yourself—your own courage and self-respect. Courage, by all means—if the world rattled to pieces about your ears! He had taught

me that always, but that night more than ever before. And Heaven knows I needed it just then. For now the vestiges of my old Universe were crumbling fast.

It was not Christianity now—as a supernatural revelation—that I even attempted to defend. It was its whole explanation and philosophy of the Universe. I saw clearly that the last and greatest factor in my old belief was going—that deep, almost instinctive sense of a personal God, a benevolent, manlike deity, bound to us by ties of affection, conducting His universe with constant care for the individual man, according to the law of love. Revelation and old authority once put aside, what was there to justify such a view? Was it true in actual experience or observation of life, human or animal? Was it even conceivable? Was it not, the whole idea, considered broadly, just the naïve, grotesque, immature notion which would naturally spring up in the childhood of a race—one race, of one particular species of life, among who knows how many other million species, known or unknown, living or dead or still to be born in the universe? Gradually, though I still instinctively looked up to Him in time of stress or trouble, God was fading from the sky above me, where He had been watching over me since the dawning of my consciousness.

When my telegram came, I knew before I

opened it. It was signed, as I expected, by Celeste Griswold. In half a dozen hours I was back again in the lonely white house with the pillars. Celeste and her father were waiting for me there. I saw again the stern-faced master of the house, silent, in the great bed beneath the dark steel engraving of the crucifixion.

I slept again that night, as on the night after my grandmother's death, in the white guest-chamber of the Griswolds. It seemed so utterly unchanged in its precise arrangement—the immaculate high bed, the white curtains, the sense of fragrant cleanness. The street light, even, shone exactly as it had shone before in the glass prisms that fenced the little brass shepherdess on the candlestick, and flashed the brilliant little point of light upon which my eye focused as I lay there and thought.

It was all the same—but I was changed, absolutely. My thoughts were entirely different now. My old fear of death was upon me still. But it was no longer that fierce, boyish emotion, holding in its very fierceness its own eager expectance of relief. Now it was dull acceptance and despair before a final and inevitable judgment of nature. It was, in a way, worse than the earlier emotion—more oppressive. But after a while one could sleep. I did sleep.

There was the usual melancholy pressure of

the time during those next few days—the sense of unreality, of intolerable idleness and reflection, crossed by petty details of household arrangement. It was Celeste Griswold principally who took charge of affairs for me—of the management and direction of the house. She looked thinner, a little tired. With her mother's increasing sickness she was under a constant strain.

And next to Celeste and her father in unusual kindness and support to me came—very unexpectedly—the doctor. His face, with its kindly, mocking smile, its old expression of the knowledge of good and evil, was drawn and sobered. He was hard hit by what had happened; for there had been an odd feeling of friendship and respect between him and my grandfather. With me, my grandfather had made him an executor of his estate, left as he had promised, entirely to me. I was glad to have the doctor with me. His intelligence and understanding became almost a necessity. We talked considerably together about my biology—about my future plans.

But, of all that happened in that week, the event I most remember was the last—the memorial prayer meeting in the vestry of the White Church. My grandfather was a public figure, in his way; a pillar of support for the White Church; a kind of local magnate of religion. Some expression of public sentiment was demanded.

It was quite an occasion, of its kind. Many people attended from outside the church—from the village and from the countryside for miles around; for my grandfather had many friends in the country. There were several clergymen present: President Mercer of the Christian College; Dr. Spurdle, the new minister of the Brick Church in the village, whom my grandfather disliked so. It all seemed strange to me, of course—stranger and more old-fashioned than ever. What interested me most of all were those men from the country, those sharp-eyed, grizzled farmers.

The services were led, naturally, by Mr. Griswold. He was much moved. There was the same old extraordinary emotional quality in his vibrant voice. And in his memories of my grandfather, and especially in his prayer for " Thy servant that is gone, and Thy young servant who remains to succeed him," he very nearly broke me down.

There were grief, regret, and rebellion in my heart as I sat there in the worn, familiar place—the old church vestry. For twenty centuries men had had this emotional support, this belief in supernatural aid—especially at times like this. Now I and men like me everywhere were suddenly deprived of it. Not by any act or initiative of our own, but by force of the knowledge and the atmosphere of the age we were born into. It

was, emotionally at least, as Mr. Griswold had so often said, a curse, an actual curse of education.

My eyes looked about, as I thought it, to those men from the country, those lean, bearded farmers—with their sharp eyes, their faces crisscrossed by New England weather, their hands gnarled and stained like roots by New England soil—as they sat looking straight ahead, their frail, thin, wiry wives, in their best black dresses, beside them. What did those men believe in their heart—those men who sat there stiffly, thinking their own thoughts, but never speaking them? What did they believe, really—this hard, secretive, skeptical race from which I and mine were sprung—my own people? What did they believe? Who would ever know? What is the belief of the adult man? Who knows? Does he know himself?

And, naturally, as I thought of that, my mind turned back again, as it had through all that service, to the strange irony of the real situation—that formal and pretentious ceremony over the church magnate, the man who at heart was as skeptical, almost, as I myself.

The service was nearly over now. Many things had been said that should not have been—awkward, fulsome, grotesque, in bad taste. But I saw my grandfather only as I saw him last, with his lamp, going down the passage way to his empty bedroom. A wave of pride and admiration swept

over me, for the silence and grim courage of the man.

"Whatever you believe, wherever he may be or may not be now, stand up and bow your head to him," I said to myself. "He was a man!"

And I knew that at heart all those hard-featured people felt exactly the same way.

There was an awkward pause when the ceremony was done, and very soon I realized that I myself was the center of unusual curiosity and respect. I did not fully sense it at the beginning.

It was Mrs. Judd who greeted me first, her eyelids, in her dull white face, raw with another festival of weeping.

"Your grandfather has gone, Calvin. This is now your work—your responsibility."

In my haste to break from her I didn't quite catch her meaning.

Others followed, to shake my hand: Mr. Doty, with his white vest, his continual smile, led me aside.

"Some time," he said with deep significance, while I listened blankly, "you and I must have a talk together about what it is best to do concerning the future of this church of ours."

The group of subdued men and women with whom I had met at the prayer meetings in the summer were particularly warm in their greetings and their comfort. The man with the beard

and rigid face and the gift of prayer pressed up to me.

"Yet we are most thankful to our God," he exclaimed dramatically, as he grasped my hand. "He has raised up among us a David who shall threefold take the place of Saul."

Finally, I saw. It was a sequel to my attendance on the prayer meetings with them in the summer—a most natural misunderstanding of my action. It was their belief that I, at my grandfather's death, with my grandfather's resources, would be a pillar of their church. I got away as soon as I could. I saw that it was time for me to act. I was in an intolerably false position, and I must end it at the earliest possible moment. I must give up my membership in the White Church. I was no longer a Christian. I certainly could not pose as a pillar of a church!

CHAPTER VIII

The Road into the Dark

THAT night I was to leave again for college, on the early morning train. It was the best train for me, all things considered. And again I was to wait at my own house until train-time.

That evening, for the first time in that empty, busy week, Celeste Griswold and I were alone, with leisure to talk to each other.

"I must be going home pretty soon," I said. "You are tired—tired to death."

She had had the management of both households on her shoulders—mine and her father's—that whole long week. And her mother was a constant care upon her, day and night.

"Oh, no, not so very," said Celeste. "Stay, please. I want you to stay."

For a wonder, she wasn't doing any work. She leaned back, her hands in her lap, in an easy-chair.

"Your mother," I said, reminded of her, "how is she—any better?"

"Not much—not much changed," she said.

"It's my father now. My father worries more than my mother does, just now."

"He isn't sick?" I asked her.

"No—not exactly," said Celeste. "I wish sometimes he were. Sick in his bed, I mean, so that we could make him rest. He won't be still now; he can't. He's like a restless spirit, wandering about the hills."

She stopped, and I waited. She was talking low; soliloquizing, almost.

"Those walks of his—if we could only keep him from them," she went on—"those tramps of his about the hills. But we can't; we can't do anything with him. Day and night, any time, he is likely to start up and go out. Day or night—it's all the same to him. He sleeps so badly now—so badly," she said, half musing, half thinking aloud. "And then he comes back, bathed in perspiration, trembling, out of breath. With that and his services on Sundays he loses every ounce of strength he has. Oh, you don't know how I worry about him!"

"Yes, I do—a little," I said.

"Suppose something should happen to him out there—in one of those lonely places," she went on. "He's an old man now, Calvin. His arteries—his heart—aren't so young as they were. But you can't make him see that. You can't make him take care of himself. He's so careless, so

impetuous, and so troubled now—especially since your grandfather died.

"It's struck him—your grandfather's death," she explained, "so much harder than we know, or can know. It's such a shock, a change—for him personally, and in the church. He always relied so much upon your grandfather there."

"Yes," I said, and was silent.

"These old people," said Celeste slowly, "father, especially, we can't understand how things are changing for them, passing away—everything! They change fast enough for us—but for them!"

"It must be horrible," I said, sensing it.

"It has been very hard for you, Calvin—this week," said Celeste Griswold finally, changing the subject, "with your new faith—your change. It has been very hard, hasn't it?"

"Yes," I said.

"I have wanted to—to ask you," she said hesitantly. "Have you come back at all to what you used to believe?"

"No," I answered.

"I thought not," said Celeste, and paused.

"Had you still thought I would?" I asked.

"No," said Celeste slowly, "not lately I haven't. I have changed somewhat, I think, myself. I wanted to tell you that, too. It is only fair. I've changed—I'm not quite sure how

much. But some things, I know, I'm not so certain about. Miracles, for instance. Very likely you may be right; very likely they didn't happen."

"They didn't," I said.

"But, oh," said Celeste Griswold, "what difference if they didn't? What difference does it make? We still have the real belief—the real essence of Christianity. We know that the kindness of God watches continually over us, His children."

Her eyes kindled as she spoke.

"We can't help but believe that," she said, "while we live. Can we? Can we?" she asked again, for I did not answer.

"I don't believe that—now," I said at last.

She stared at me for a moment.

"Not even that!" she said. "Not even that?" The life had left her voice.

"Not even that!" I told her.

She fell back in her chair, with an exclamation of regret.

"Why a personal God more than a personal devil?" I asked.

"Don't," she said curtly; "that's blasphemy."

For several moments neither of us spoke.

Then I showed her how false my position had become in relation to the White Church, and the absolute necessity of my leaving it. She acquiesced dully at first, as if her mind were not

really reached by what I was saying. But very soon she was aroused again—a new and different interest in her eyes.

"Not to-night," she said decidedly, when I proposed that I should tell her father. "Not to-night! You don't know—you don't see him as I do. The last two nights, ever since your grandfather died, he's scarcely slept at all. He was out last night—walking. And now again to-night. He'll come in exhausted, entirely worn out. The best way will be to write him—a little later," she continued, "after I've tried to prepare him a little for it."

I promised her I would wait.

"Oh, I wouldn't have him have that strain—not to-night—for all the world! You see,—or possibly you don't see,—after last summer, after you went so often to his prayer meetings, he has misunderstood. He's counted so entirely on you."

"Yes," I said. I saw, of course, that she was right.

"Now," she said slowly, "it's got to come, I suppose. You know what you must do. But I must save him—all I can. That's my part. Oh, I wouldn't have him know about me—that I had changed at all." She thought a moment, then went on again: "I couldn't; I couldn't take the risk. I couldn't! That's all. I wouldn't have him even suspect——"

She stopped and grasped my arm. "Here he is now," she said, and Mr. Griswold came into the hall.

I was surprised, after what she had expected, at the old man's mood when I saw him enter.

He seemed almost buoyant, in spite of the worn look upon his face.

"Let me take them, father," said Celeste, springing up and reaching for his hat and cane. For he had walked straight in to where we sat with his hat still upon his head.

"You see, Calvin," said the old man to me, as he handed them to her, "what goes on here day after day. This girl has charge of everything here. You don't realize what a domestic tyrant she has become since you knew her. Her mother and I have not a word to say about what we shall do in our own household. She manages us both like a pair of great children."

"Certainly I do," said Celeste, smiling. "Somebody has to."

He smiled back at her, and reached out and patted her hand from where he had seated himself beside her.

"I was just about leaving, Mr. Griswold, when you came. I am going out on the morning train," I said, getting up. For I thought it would be safer not to stay and talk with him.

"Not quite yet, Calvin, my boy," said Mr.

Griswold. "You can stop with us a little while, I think."

I said perhaps, a little longer. And I saw then, I thought, Celeste's disapproval.

"I was thinking of your grandfather, Calvin, as I came in—of all your race," said Mr. Griswold, after a silence. "They have been plain, honest, God-fearing people, all of them. It is something—something never to be estimated to have a Godly inheritance such as yours."

"Yes, sir," I said uneasily.

"Your grandfather," mused Mr. Griswold—"a silent man, not given to words or promises. But what a man he was—what a Christian man! I can not tell what he meant to me, my boy. Of all the men I ever knew, there was no one—no one—that you could tie to as you could to Calvin Morgan. Of all the men I ever knew, I think, I liked—him—best."

The old man's voice grew slow and husky. He was silent, busy with old thoughts. Our eyes were on him—Celeste's and mine—as we sat silent, waiting, both a little uneasy. I started up, once, to go away. But he still sat musing. I could not get the courage to break in and disturb him.

"And now you, Calvin—I believe God means that you should take his place," he said, rousing himself.

"Yes, sir?" I said a little awkwardly. "I want to try."

Celeste Griswold's eyes were on me sharply now.

"In his business," said Mr. Griswold, "with men—with the church."

I could not quite say yes to that.

"With the church," said Mr. Griswold, looking up quickly when I did not answer; "especially with our church."

I saw Celeste Griswold's tense look. I could not think of exactly what to say. She started to say something then herself; but her father anticipated her.

"You do not answer," said Mr. Griswold, looking sharply at my face. "But you certainly will not fail us. You are a man now. You will take up, will you not, when you return, the duties of your membership in the Church of Christ?" he asked severely.

I sat confused, not wanting to answer, unwilling to injure him. But now it was impossible to escape. His suspicions were well roused.

"No, sir," I stammered out at last. "I'm afraid—I can't!"

"Can't!" said Mr. Griswold. "Can't! Why not?"

He rose to his feet. Celeste and I followed

him. Celeste was pale and speechless. I myself stood silent.

"I think I don't quite understand, Calvin," said Mr. Griswold, passing his hand across his face.

"I am not a Christian—I don't believe any longer, sir," I said, plunging. "I can't. So I'll have to give up my membership in the church. So I'll have to leave," I ended lamely.

"What change is this!" cried Mr. Griswold fiercely. "You told me—you told us— You came to our prayer meetings all of last summer!"

"Yes."

"Why, sir?" demanded Mr. Griswold. "Were you jeering at us? Were you flouting us?"

"God knows, I never jeered, Mr. Griswold," I said. "God knows, I wish it were not so." Beside him I saw the white, strained face of his daughter.

"I see, sir, I see," said Mr. Griswold. "You are one of these modern educated men! You are an infidel, sir—an atheist. You are an enemy of the Church of Christ."

His whole manner of address was stiff and formal. Never before, of course, had he ever addressed me as "sir"—or as anything but my familiar boyish name. He never called me by my Christian name again. I had removed myself to another world than his.

"No, Mr. Griswold; I am not an atheist—nor an enemy," I said. "I merely feel—I feel that to be honest I must leave the church."

"Please! Don't go any further now, father—please!" said Celeste, casting a quick and reproachful glance at me.

"No," he answered her, and turned to me again.

"No," he said to me. "On the threshold, at the edge of manhood, you desert us."

"I must go, Mr. Griswold," I said. "Can't you see," I went on, "I'm not the only one? There are——"

"No, sir; you are right," said the old man quickly, as if listening for that very thing. "Not in our church. I know, sir. I understand you. We are losing members constantly, I know. But there is a particular reason here—in this church. Its pastor is an old man. He can not hold them. He has lost the gift."

"No," I said quickly, for his self-humiliation was a shocking thing to see. He was trembling as he spoke. "I don't mean that at all. It is the same everywhere—in all the churches. Membership may increase in places, but the interest is dying everywhere."

The more I talked the more I blundered.

"How dare you say that, sir!" said Mr. Gris-

wold. "How dare you say that of the Church of Christ!"

"Isn't it the truth?" I asked him—for I was excited now.

"Must I stand here," said Mr. Griswold sternly, "and listen to such statements from a wayward boy?"

And almost as he said it he clapped his hand before his eyes.

"Oh, my God, my God!" he said. "What is upon us? What is upon us?" And he staggered back and crumpled down upon the old sofa by the wall.

"Calvin! Help me!" cried Celeste's voice sharply to me.

We both sprang forward to support him.

He sat up almost immediately again.

"You will excuse me, sir," he said. "I have these dizzy spells occasionally."

But he kept his hand to his eyes still.

Celeste sat beside him. I stood awkwardly before them, waiting.

"But not you, Celeste," said Mr. Griswold suddenly. "Not you, my girl! You have not changed? I still can trust in you."

"Have you ever found you could not trust me, father?" said Celeste.

Another question, not an answer! I noticed it even then. But he did not.

"Never, little daughter," he said. "Never. And never will." And he took her hand and laid it against his cheek.

"And now I think," said Mr. Griswold, slowly rising, "I will say good night. Good night, sir," he said to me. "No, I thank you, I do not require your assistance; I can walk perfectly well now."

He climbed upstairs slowly and unaided, steadying himself by the mahogany railing of the steep old staircase.

Celeste Griswold and I were silent when we were alone again. There was the strain of great grief in her face; and, more than that, the hardness of anger.

"You could have avoided that," she said.

I acknowledged that I had been awkward.

She turned away from me and walked toward the white mantelpiece.

"Oh," she cried bitterly, "what harm have we ever done you, Calvin Morgan, that you should hurt him so?"

"Oh, for God's sake, Celeste—" I said, protesting.

For it wasn't fair; it was preposterous. The last thing I would willingly have done was to hurt those two people. They were almost the last two friends I had on earth.

She kept her face still turned from me.

"Oh, what have you done!" she said. "What have you done!"

"I am sorry, Celeste," I said awkwardly. "I am very sorry."

She did not answer me.

"You aren't fair," I said, and moved toward her. She shrank away from me without a word.

"Later—when you think it over," I went on, embarrassed, stumbling along to say something, "I will write——"

At the word she turned suddenly.

"You will not write me," she said sharply—"ever!"

"Not write you!" I exclaimed.

"No, not now," she answered.

I stood staring at her, for we had written each other always since I had been away at college.

"Did you think that, after to-night—" she was saying.

"Don't, Celeste!" I broke in.

The whole thing seemed so bitterly unjust.

"Haven't you any eyes for other people, ever?" asked Celeste Griswold. "Don't they exist for you?

"What do you think would happen to my father if he thought I was leaving him—that I was going away, as you have, to-night?"

I did not answer.

"It would kill him," she said. "I believe it! It would kill him."

We were whispering—so that her father would not hear.

She came closer to me, looking cautiously up the stairway, speaking in a tense, fierce whisper:

"Do you suppose, now, that I will ever let him have the least suspicion that I would leave him that way? The slightest hint that you had taken me with you—even as far as you have taken me? Do you think I could let him see you write me now—week after week?"

"Do you call that honest, Celeste?" I said angrily.

"Honest!" retorted Celeste Griswold. Her eyes blazed into mine and held there. Mine dropped first.

"It will be hard enough now, when he thinks it over," she went on after a silence. "If we should write again, how could he help—suspecting? No, we won't write," she said, concluding, "either of us. That's all over."

"Celeste—" I began. It seemed so unnecessary, so absurd.

She shook her head.

"You don't understand," she said. "You can't. You're not that kind; you haven't any imagination that way. Men haven't, anyway.

All gone—every one: your grandfather—you—all left him—every one!"

She stopped, facing me again; then went on in her fierce, eager whisper: "And now I—do you think I would strike him that last blow! Do you think I would give him one thought—one hint of a thing that might torture him to death?"

She faced me a little longer, while I tried to speak—then turned wearily away.

"No, we won't write again, Calvin," she said. "Good night." She moved back once more toward the mantel.

"Please go," she said very quietly. "Please go. I wish you would go now."

She laid her arms upon the mantelpiece, her face upon her arms. She was not crying. She stood, her shoulders motionless, perfectly still.

I started toward her—tried to speak. She shrank away.

"Don't," she said dully. "Don't! Please go."

I stopped, considered a moment, turned toward the outer door. I thought perhaps she might speak to me. But there was not a word from her—not a sound. And so I left the Griswolds' house. I broke finally the last tie to the old White Church of my fathers.

Outside, the stars shone blurred in a murky sky. I smiled bitterly when I looked up at it. The

end had come, a great turning-point in my life. That faith of my little childhood—that ancient Hebrew sky, peopled with strange presences—with God! All gone; all passed away for me like some dead mythology! No doubt, somewhere, God existed. But what could we know of Him? How could we know?

It was warm still—an unseasonably warm night for October. As I passed up the walk to my vacant house, I became conscious of the presence of Mr. Tubbs rocking upon his piazza.

"Say," called Mr. Tubbs. "Come over here a minute, will you?

"Say, you know that thing I've been going to speak to you about?" he said to me when I had gone over. "Well, this is what it is I wanted to ask you. Did you ever think of joining the Odd Fellows? You ought to. They're a great, big, strong organization. Any man who can ought to consider it anyhow.

"Think it over," said Mr. Tubbs, when I left him. "Think it over."

He was saying it as I passed into my empty house. He stopped as I closed the door. But I could still hear the *thump, thump, thumping* of his feet as he rocked on nowhere, through the dark.

CHAPTER IX

The Vale of Peace

I SHALL never forget the strange and complex emotions of those next few months. Indeed, they persist in me still—though naturally less fresh and poignant.

I had given up my belief in Christianity; nor have I ever since regained it. Intellectually I held, and still hold, that the old Universe I was born into is inconceivable to-day—that our present knowledge shows that it does not exist. Emotionally, by habit almost as deep as instinct, it still persisted. Still, instinctively, under emotional stress, I raised my eyes upward to a personal God seated in the heavens; still, instinctively, I hoped that somewhere those other human beings whom I had loved and lost existed yet—were not extinguished at their death, as were the countless multitudes of other living things.

And so, for months at least, I was in this curious situation: The old Universe, which I had given up because of its non-existence, still existed for me in my instincts and emotions. I was an exile, a self-banished, spiritual exile—into another

Universe which my intellect said was real, but which my whole heart revolted against.

I know that there is an immature, rather pathetic form of bravado which affects to leave Christianity with joy, and goes off whistling into the dark. But it is not really so, I believe, with the thousands and thousands of men who, openly or secretly, are going now the way I went. They have gone—all of them, I think—with great regret. Why should it be otherwise? Why should the individual human being go out willingly from that old Universe of Christianity, nicely fitted up by the dearest, deepest hopes and longings of the race to be the home of Man, into a new, hostile, and unaccustomed Universe—a vast, unexplored space of warring forces, in which the human individual is as negligible as an ant.

But it is more than regret that remains—or it was with me. You can not turn off a man's belief, like water from a faucet—nor any other deep habit of mind, I suppose. Old trains of thought, old emotions, old longings remain—and old viewpoints, curious and illogical, but perfectly sincere.

Occasionally there came back to me again that speculation of the summer. Was I witnessing the disintegration of another great faith—the first rapid progress of the fading away of the Christian religion from the earth? The idea still

shocked me—terrified me in a way, despite the fact that I myself had just formally renounced my belief.

I had had acknowledgments of my withdrawal from the White Church soon after my last interview with Mr. Griswold, sent both by the clerk of the church and by Mr. Griswold himself. Besides these, I had no letters from the Street of white houses—with the sole exception of two from the doctor. From Celeste Griswold I had not heard at all. It was as if a heavy door had closed between me and all my past. I was alone—left to work out, essentially by myself, a way into the new and uncertain Universe where my loss of faith had left me.

I was lonely, rebellious, melancholy, with the romantic, melodramatic melancholy of youth. But, after all, I had the life and hope of twenty-one; and I had, too, a restless and eager curiosity which I know now has always been unusual, perhaps abnormal, with me. My apprentice work in the science of life held me more and more: I spent my two short vacations of that last college year at it, and I now planned definitely to carry it further by studying in Germany.

And so it was the next summer after my graduation before I returned to the Street of white houses again—and then only preparatory to my start abroad.

It seemed very still the afternoon I returned there—still with the silence of a dozing, aging country town. The pitiless scrutiny of a summer afternoon sun shone upon the dusty street. There was no doubt of it—the place grew shabby.

The trolley car that had brought me thumped and jarred its way into the distance. There was a woman somewhere, singing in an old, cracked voice that favorite, mysterious song of my childhood:

"Shall we gather at the river?"

I stopped and listened. I had not heard that song before in years.

An old cat lay stretched out, cooling upon a stone in the shadow of our house; a horse stamped; somewhere from the elm trees the song of the vireo came to me again through the hot, still air. But nowhere was any one in sight.

I went into the old house with the white pillars—my house now. Our old servant, the deaf old "hired girl" who kept it open, greeted me. She lived alone in the kitchen. The old house was closed in front,—like so many houses in old New England,—apparently all dark and dead, but still with just one spark of old life at the back.

I came out again, oppressed; and there, at last, was a human being. Mr. Tubbs, the organist, sat on his porch, across the lawn, his carpet

slippers on his feet. I went over to sit down with him.

"Well, well, how are you?" said Mr. Tubbs, rising slowly from his old rocker.

"Fine," I said. "How's everything here?"

"Just the same—just the same," said Mr. Tubbs. "Nothing new."

"That's good," I said.

"No excitement; no excitement at all," said Mr. Tubbs, "since the time you nearly closed up the White Church."

"Closed up the White Church!" I said. "I?"

"That's what they tell me," said Mr. Tubbs imperturbably.

"How?" I asked.

"Your grandfather just about supported it, didn't he?" asked Mr. Tubbs.

"He gave a good deal, I suppose," I answered, beginning to understand.

"Well, I suppose they counted on you to do the same," said Mr. Tubbs. "Of course, I don't know anything about it," he hastened to explain. "I just take what they tell me."

My mind was occupied with the possibilities he had suggested.

"There was a good deal of talk about it," said Mr. Tubbs.

"Was there?" I said absently.

"Yes; there was a lot of it, when you left.

I don't believe I ever got the straight of it. Did you resign?"

"Yes," I said.

"Well, well," said Mr. Tubbs. "So you resigned from the church. What did you resign for, when you were once in?"

"They're all right now, are they?" I asked, rousing myself. "The church, I mean?"

"Oh, I guess so," said Mr. Tubbs. "I'm getting my money regular from them; I know that."

"That's good," I said.

"And they're going to have the ordination of the new minister next week."

"The new minister!" I said.

"Why, yes," said Mr. Tubbs. "Old Griswold resigned, and they've got a new one now. The old man is going to be a kind of assistant—kind of retired on a pension, you might say. They call him some name—emeritus; that's it, ain't it?—pastor emeritus. Why, you knew that, didn't you?" asked Mr. Tubbs.

"No," I said. It certainly was strange that I had not heard it, in some way.

"Is that so?" said Mr. Tubbs, with the natural satisfaction of one who bears important news.

"Yes," he went on, enlarging it. "You ought to have seen the old man at the first of it. He almost went crazy when they talked about closing up his church, at the start there. Crazy—tramping

up and down the town like a lunatic. Queer old codger, ain't he? I like him, too. But he's a kind of a crank, aint he? "

"What are they living on—his family?" I asked quickly.

"I guess it was pretty hard sleddin' for a while —for him and his sick wife and that girl of his," said Mr. Tubbs. "They were poorer'n poverty. I guess the girl took the brunt of it; she had to. The old man's a child in money matters. He always gave away everything he could lay his hands on. But she's smart—a smart girl," said Mr. Tubbs, winking broadly at me. "Ain't she, eh? I guess I don't have to tell you.

"She kept them going some way," he went on, when he received no response from me—"patchin' and darnin' and fixin' them up. I don't believe they've got anything on that ain't been turned three times. But now I suppose it'll be different; I suppose they'll have a little ready money."

I got up and left him and went home. I wanted to be alone. What had I been responsible for—how much? What had I done to the White Church—to its minister—to Celeste Griswold? Had I, for all these months, been an unconscious instrument in the hands of fate for their destruction?

So that first afternoon, although it was already quite late, I found myself in the office of Mr.

Doty, the new chief magnate of the White Church, in his growing and ever more prosperous stomach bitters factory.

"Come right in; sit right down," said Mr. Doty heartily—taking my hand into both of his white, soft palms. His big face, his white tie and waistcoat, his close, iron-gray side-whiskers even, radiated prosperity and an almost wanton good will. His left hand traveled to my shoulder while his right still heartily shook mine.

"Well, yes," he said, when the first excess of greetings had passed away and I had asked my question. "Your going, or your grandfather's going—whichever way you put it—almost closed us up."

His manner changed entirely as we came down to talking business. His eyes were shrewd and confident; his speech was terse and to the point—stripped at once of all superfluous ornament.

"Yes, it did look pretty dark for a while there after you left us," said Mr. Doty. "What did you do it for, young man?" he said, interrupting himself. "What did you do it for? I never could understand."

I murmured something.

"Well, anyway," went on Mr. Doty, after listening attentively to it—apparently in vain—"anyway, you almost closed us up. The first thing I knew was Mr. Griswold coming to me to

resign just after you went back to college. Why, it was the morning after you left!" said Mr. Doty, remembering.

"'I'm too old,' he said. 'I should have gone long ago. God's judgment is on me for remaining. New blood, new blood!' he kept saying. 'You've got to have a younger man.'

"I saw I couldn't talk to him then. I never saw a man in such a state. He was shaking all over. His skin was as yellow as saffron. So, finally, I sent him away, and said we would consider it. We all thought that he would stay on and finish out his thirty years, anyway.

"But when we came to look into it," said Mr. Doty, settling down into his chair and putting his finger-tips together before his face, "the old man was right: something had to be done. I'll tell you," said Mr. Doty. "It looked so bad there, first off, that we just about settled it that there was nothing to do but shut up the old church. Shut it up and all go over to the Brick Church in the village—over to Dr. Spurdle's."

He stopped and looked at me.

"Now, there's the man you ought to have seen about those doubts and qualms of yours," said Mr. Doty. "He'd have straightened you out quicker than scat. He'd put you on firm foundations again. There's a man that's educated with the best of them."

He stopped again. To my surprise, he began to laugh. "Excuse me," he said.

"What is it?" I asked him.

"I was thinking of something your grandfather said about him once—about that lecture of his, 'The Message of Sordello.'

"'Who is this Sordello he keeps talking about?' said your grandfather. 'Some Italian, eh? Well, what's that got to do with religion?' Your grandfather didn't like Spurdle," explained Mr. Doty, "because he wore a ring, and parted his hair in the middle. But, just the same, Dr. Spurdle's a coming man," affirmed Mr. Doty again. "And I've seen a good many ministers. I know them. I've been on a good many committees to choose them before I came here."

All I knew of the Rev. Dr. H. Wingate Spurdle were his Browning lectures.

"Now you know what the sensible thing for us to do was," said Mr. Doty, "just as well as I do. It was just as I said: to close up this church—close it up and cut down your overhead charges. There's room enough for us all in Spurdle's church, and to spare. What's the use of two plants, when one will do? Cut down your overhead charges," said Mr. Doty; "that's what I believe in—everywhere. It's good business; it's good common sense."

"But the question was," went on Mr. Doty, "what were we going to do with the old man?

You couldn't turn him out—not after all those years, could you? Especially when everybody knew he hadn't got a dollar. You couldn't, could you?"

"No," I said emphatically.

"No," said Mr. Doty. "It didn't seem right. Nor closing up the old church, either—when you came right down to it. That's one of the oldest churches in the State; did you know it?"

I said I had thought so.

"Yes," said Mr. Doty. "Oh, it wasn't easy. But we thought we'd have to do it. But then, all at once, the old man started out himself. We didn't tell him about our idea at first; but he got hold of it somewhere, and he came right over to my house to see me about it—before breakfast. He didn't give me time to get up.

"He was like a madman that morning," said Mr. Doty, smiling reminiscently.

"'No, Mr. Doty, never!' he said to me. 'As God is my witness, never! You shall not close up our church.'

"He was just as headstrong about Dr. Spurdle. He couldn't talk about him, even, without shouting. 'My people—under that man?' he said. 'No!' He doesn't like him any more than your grandfather did. He says he preaches Robert Browning instead of Christ crucified," explained Mr. Doty, smiling again.

I could almost hear Mr. Griswold saying it.

"'What'll you do?' I asked him," Mr. Doty continued. "'We've got to have money—and quite a lot of it.'

"'Money!' said the old man. 'What is money to our God? We can do it,' said the old man.

"He used to come around to see me every morning, repeating it: 'We can do it, Mr. Doty. We can do it. It'll all come right.'

"Well, we did," said Mr. Doty, "finally. But we never would have without the old man. He must have been a strong, powerful man in his day," commented Mr. Doty. "I never saw anybody like him. He wore us all out getting that money. He was at it night and day—till finally it came. But it 'most killed him getting it. Toward the last of it he trembled so, I thought he must have the palsy. But he kept right at it. He got money out of people who never gave a dollar before in their lives."

"He didn't ask me," I said.

"Well, no," said Mr. Doty. "No. We spoke of that. But Mr. Griswold wouldn't have it. He said the Church of Christ couldn't take the money of an infidel. Those are *his* words, you understand."

"Yes, I understand," I assured him.

"Yes," said Mr. Doty; "finally we raised it. We raised quite a good deal by subscription, and

then some of us took a mortgage on the church property. Well, we got the debts pretty well cleared up. And then—then the old man was going to step down and out, anyway.

"'Young blood; that's what you got to have,' he kept saying. 'I'm too old; my time is past.'

"But, of course, we couldn't hear to his leaving us entirely," said Mr. Doty. "That wouldn't do—not after all he had been doing. So then, finally, we fixed it up this way: we took his old salary, twelve hundred dollars, and gave him five hundred dollars of it. And the rest we took and got a young minister just out of theological seminary."

"Can the Griswolds live on five hundred dollars a year?" I asked.

"He says they can," said Mr. Doty.

"What kind of a man is the new minister?" I asked, after a little wait.

"Mr. Millett?" said Mr. Doty. "Oh, he's a good young man. But, when you think of it, what can you get for seven hundred dollars a year? You can't get much of a preacher nowadays for that money, can you?"

"No," I replied.

"No. And you don't seem," he said reflectively, "to have so much to pick from, anyhow, as you used to. They don't seem to get such good

stock into the ministry as they did. Do you think so?"

"No," I said, "I do not."

"No; I tell you," continued Mr. Doty, getting up and closing his desk, "about all we can expect now is to keep the old church going while Mr. Griswold lasts.

"Well, shall we walk along home together?" asked Mr. Doty then. His manner was changed once more—from the business to the personal. He was fixing the collar of my coat.

"I want you two men to get together, my boy—you and Dr. Spurdle," he said solicitously. "I want you to have a talk with him some time. He'll fix you up; he'll fix you up in two shakes of a lamb's tail. You'll be back with us yet."

He left me, with this hope, at my gate. I went in, and up to my own old room; and sat down to try and think the situation out. It was supper-time before I had got anywhere.

After supper Mr. Tubbs called me over to his porch across the lawn. His sociability grew already a little oppressive. For he was more than agreeable; he was hungry for companionship in his vigil up on his porch—and an opportunity to talk. He conversed equably and endlessly on local history, from the text of occasional passers-by.

The bell of the White Church began to ring, as

he talked—arousing again a thousand memories, bringing back again the whole atmosphere of my childhood. I realized that it was prayer meeting night. And soon we saw passing the few attendants—the women in black gowns, the three or four bent old men—the same old, slow, black-clothed flock of Mr. Griswold's Thursday evening meetings, but smaller, a little smaller, always dwindling year by year.

"The old man still keeps going," said Mr. Tubbs.

I looked down the street, and saw Mr. Griswold, with his Bible in his hand. He seemed a little less steady in his walk.

"He's getting kind of wabbly," said Mr. Tubbs. "He's aged a lot these last six months."

And, as he spoke, it struck me that I had not seen Celeste Griswold going in to the service.

"No; she stays at home with her mother," said Mr. Tubbs, to my question.

"I believe," I said, more or less transparently, a little later, "I'll walk down the street a while."

Mr. Tubbs took my departure as something to be expected. But when I was half way down his walk he recalled something.

"Say, you ain't forgot about the Odd Fellows, have you?" called Mr. Tubbs.

"No," I said, stopping and turning around.

"We're gettin' stronger'n ever in this town," said Mr. Tubbs. "Some day—and it ain't so far off, either—we're going to have our own hall here, so we'll have an agreeable meetin'-place for everybody."

I walked along.

I had not known what I should do about seeing Celeste Griswold, after that long silence of hers. I had debated it many times. But now it was no longer a matter of debate. Now that I was here, an impulse stronger than myself moved and controlled me. I remember well the crunch of my feet upon the gravel walk of the parsonage—the curious little catch in my breath as I went up the steps. Through the low window of the old house I could see Celeste inside, sewing.

I knocked, stepped up, and stood in the open doorway. She rose, unconscious of my presence there or in the town, and came toward me. There were a number of greetings I had practised in my mind before our next meeting—bitter, generous, flippant. All that I really said was "Celeste" —a little hoarsely.

She said nothing at all. Her hand came up before her face with a sudden motion of warding me away.

"May I come in?" I asked.

"Yes," answered Celeste in a low voice.

"I was not sure," I stammered.

"Sure?" she asked, in a somewhat louder tone.

"That I should be welcomed."

"Please don't!" she said.

"I beg your pardon, Celeste," I replied.

"We're not like that—you know it," said Celeste Griswold's clear voice, with a touch of quick resentment.

"I could scarcely blame you if you were, Celeste," I said.

We had seated ourselves, without even, as I remember, shaking hands.

"The first thing I want to say," I went on hurriedly, "before anything else, I want to tell you: I did not know—I hadn't the slightest idea of what had happened here until I came this afternoon. I didn't even know your father had resigned."

She glanced up. Her eyes, clear and direct, met mine—then looked down again.

"How is your father, Celeste?" I asked.

"Pretty tired," she answered. She had taken her sewing into her lap again.

"Celeste," I said, "I can't tell you how sorry I am—how disgusted with myself for causing him all that trouble."

"You didn't cause it," said Celeste. She had begun to sew now.

"I set it going," I said.

"No," said Celeste, letting her work drop into her lap again. "I thought so at first. But it wasn't so. If anything, I should beg your pardon for my quickness that night. But you know how I am. When you hurt my father so, I couldn't bear it. I can't ever bear to see him hurt—at all. And when he fell——"

"I know," I said.

"But it wasn't your fault," she went on; "I saw that long ago. Nor——"

"Yet you didn't write," I said quickly.

"I couldn't write; you know that," said Celeste Griswold, looking up at me again. "I can't write you now."

"The church is still to go on?" I asked, after a silence.

"Yes."

"It will never be the same to me," I said, "without your father."

I never could, as a matter of fact, think of one without the other. But then I thought how strange that might sound from me now.

"For I do think a great deal of the church and of your father, Celeste," I added.

"I know you do, Calvin," she said quietly.

"I want to ask you something," I said at last. "You know, I've got my grandfather's money now —all of it. And since I've had it the church hasn't had any—the way it used to with him. That's

what I've done—that's what happened. Isn't it? I didn't understand—not until to-day. But it is as if I had taken it away from the church, and from your father——"

Celeste had stopped sewing and was looking at me keenly. She did not speak; she waited. I stumbled on, embarrassed.

"And his work, I mean," I added. "Now, Celeste, what I thought was this—that is, perhaps you would do it, I mean. Now, can't you think up some way for some of that money to go to the White Church? That your father would let them take it, I mean to say.

"Yes," I said, hurrying, "and that some of it would come to him, too. It's a shame, the way it is," I went on, getting more excited and confused. "It isn't fair, the way it is. They haven't given him anything much—the church. And here I have this—more than I want. And I thought——"

"We are not beggars," said Celeste Griswold, flushing.

"Oh, Celeste!" I said.

She was so quick, always.

"He wouldn't take it. Nor the church, either," she said—and stopped.

Then suddenly she laughed—seeing my face, I suppose.

"The same boy," she said. "The same old dreaming, impractical boy. Look, Calvin. How

could we take your money? Put yourself in our place."

"I beg your pardon, Celeste," I said.

"Don't," she said—"don't do that again. I am afraid it is I again who ought to beg yours. You are generous. You always were."

"No," I said. "I was responsible, in a way, for everything."

"No," said Celeste Griswold. "I've thought it over a great many times. It is not your fault, nor mine—nor any one's. It's something else—something bigger than ourselves."

"It's inevitable," I said, suddenly sensing it. "It's the times—the spirit of the times."

She gave a little start; I asked her why.

"Nothing," she said; "nothing, except that you said it in exactly the same words that came to me. It is inevitable. It isn't ourselves; it is everything that surrounds us. It carries us along with it.

"No," she said, musing; "it's no one's fault—neither yours nor mine. It's inevitable; that's it. Life takes people that way, doesn't it? And turns them in different directions? You and I are on entirely opposite paths; that's all."

"No," I said quickly.

"Could they be more different?" she asked. "You're going to Germany, they say, to study that new thing, that last new knowledge of the world—

of which I shall know nothing, ever, I suppose. I shall stay here with my father—and his church."

"No; I don't believe it," I said.

"Excuse me," said Celeste—and got up.

There was some one at the door, a woman whispering, I gathered, about her mother's health: "How is she feeling to-night? Is she happier? No, I won't come in, thank you. I just thought I would ask."

It seemed to me, as I listened, that it was Miss Avery's voice speaking. Celeste came back again when she was gone. She seemed a little troubled —disturbed.

"Your mother is no better?" I asked.

"No," she answered.

I had thought not. I had heard her coughing while we talked; and once, at a particularly bad paroxysm, I saw Celeste Griswold's hands clench themselves, and noticed, when they were unclenched, the red marks of the nails, where they had been buried in her palm.

"Don't you get frightfully tired sometimes, Celeste?" I asked her. "All this care—your mother! It's too much."

"Too much!" said Celeste Griswold sharply. "My mother!"

I went away soon after that. It was nearly time for closing the prayer meeting.

"My father will want to see you later, Calvin,"

Celeste said, sending me away. "But not to-night, I think. He's too tired, too excited over the ordination next week. After that——"

"Oh, all right," I said.

"'Twenty-seven years," said Celeste.

"Is it so long as that?" I asked, fully realizing it for the first time.

"Yes," she repeated; "twenty-seven years. It's like death to him, I know—this time now. He's scarcely mentioned it once—to me; scarcely once. He couldn't, I think—he couldn't. I think I understand."

"Yes," I said, nodding.

"It is his life," she went on, "the old church. If anything should happen to it now—if, after all, they should fail, he couldn't survive it, I think; he couldn't bear it."

"No," I said. "I don't believe he could."

I was none too soon in leaving. The slow, old, black-dressed flock were coming out again from prayer meeting. I saw them as I passed—Mrs. Judd; the tall old woman who was in constant anxiety about the Hereafter; the bearded man with the gift of prayer. Only the last came by me—head down, Bible in hand. He hesitated a moment, and a gleam lighted in his eye. I thought he would certainly stop and denounce me. Then he bowed stiffly and we passed each other.

So, in these next few days before the ordina-

tion, I saw Celeste Griswold and her father only as they passed by on the street. I spent some time with the doctor, planning for my study abroad. I set up the continuation of a minor experiment of my own in an old shed in the rear of the lawn, for I could not keep my hands off my work then, even for a few weeks. And, meanwhile, I saw the preparation for the ordination.

It was an observance of some consequence locally. For the White Church was quite a famous old landmark now, and the length of service of the retiring pastor was most unusual. It was really Mr. Griswold who was the figure in the new minister's ordination and installing.

When the afternoon came, at last, I saw the exercises from beginning to end, seated in our old pew. It was mine still legally, in spite of my severance from the church. It had been the property of my people for five generations.

It was June, and the old church was dressed with the flowers of the season—old-fashioned flowers: pale pink roses, yellow lilies, and syringas; decked out, the thought struck me as I looked around, like the withered bride at a golden wedding. Behind the decorations, the place stood worn and faded and old.

On the platform were Mr. Griswold, several other figures that I knew, and Mr. Millett, the new man. I saw him then for the first time. He

seemed, at first glance, very young and very slight and pale.

It was Dr. Mercer, president of the Christian College, who began the speaking. He dwelt most gracefully upon the pleasure of the occasion—the vigorous joy of the younger man girding up his loins for his life-work; on the happiness and calm of his dear old friend, who was passing so pleasantly, his labors well accomplished, into the vale of peace.

The figure of the new minister, it seemed to me, did not warrant the comparison with the eager athlete. He seemed anemic, rather; his face had a look, a peculiar look, as if he were frightened. Beside him the stern and haggard face of Mr. Griswold suggested very little the aged servant about to rest peacefully from his labors.

Mr. Griswold himself spoke next, giving the sermon of the day. His underlying theme was the church—the temple of God. He gave his text, and repeated it, according to his old custom. It was from Habakkuk—a verse long familiar to my childhood: "But the Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him."

His voice shook just a little, I thought, as he read it. He paused for a moment afterward. His hand lay, palm up, upon the great open Bible. I remember I could see his big thumb trembling

with weakness and excitement. Otherwise he was motionless.

Had any figure in my life, I was asking myself, ever made such a mark upon my imagination? Was any memory of my childhood so impressive? There was a touch of the supernatural in my remembrance of him: Divine Authority personified, almost divinity itself, in those first dim years; the man of God, the prophet of the faith. And now, I saw, his coat was very shiny at the shoulders; one of his immaculate cuffs had been over-worn. A thin, weary, aged man—nothing more.

"You and I have met together," he began, "here in the silence of the shadow of the Almighty, how many times—how many times? Tomorrow no more, no more—not as we have been."

I watched him closely—we all did. His solemn voice filled the auditorium, as in my childhood. He was rousing himself again for another sermon of warning, but more eccentric, it seemed to me, more broken in its language and its logic.

"Many of us are gone. There, and there, and there!" he said, darting his long forefinger from one place to another in the empty pews. "We see them still, you and I, as they gathered sunny summer mornings here in the courts of the most high God—to our worship."

He stopped, his lean, wiry figure tense, his thin face more skull-like than ever.

My memory voyaged out again across the past. Its figures started back to life once more at the call of that sonorous voice. My grandfather sat motionless, his booted legs crossed, by the pew door; my grandmother, shrunk beneath her tiny shawl at the other end; and I myself half-way between them. And others, many others, all gone, too.

A few were left: across the aisle, Mr. Doty, shining in his white vest and tie; across the church, Celeste Griswold. She sat in the posture in which I remembered her even as a little girl—hands folded in her lap, her decorous, attentive church attitude. Her eyes were fixed keenly, a little anxiously, on her father's face.

"Gone, all gone," said Mr. Griswold's tremendous voice. "Gone! But here, we know, in this sanctuary still abides, the presence of the Most High God, and will abide, when we are no longer even memories. Round us, round us everywhere," he called solemnly, sweeping with his great hand, "we feel Him, we know Him near. Do you doubt it? Do any of you doubt it—who all these years have felt the Presence with you in this holy place?

"And yet—" He paused, lowering his voice. "And yet, about us everywhere, questionings, whisperings, and pointings in the marketplaces of men—in the seats of the scornful. 'Will God's church survive?' they ask—not here, but every-

where. Will the holy tabernacle, where you and I have worshiped, survive these growing, growing, growing attacks upon it? Let us see."

It was an old-time exhortation.

"Let us take our knowledge of God's chosen people—the years that led on to the destruction of the Temple."

My mind went drifting off again to memories. The day was warm; the strong, sweet, reminiscent odor of the syringas filled the place. The voice of the preacher came through to me at intervals, by snatches, as he set forth God's vengeance on the offending Jews. He called out great, roaring mouthfuls from the prophets, the awful curse of Jeremiah upon Judah:

"'Such as are for death, to death; and such as are for the sword, to the sword. . . . And I will appoint over them four kinds, saith the Lord: the sword to slay, and the dogs to tear, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the earth, to devour and destroy.'"

I lost the thread after that, drifting—caught it up again.

"Such was the fate of Israel. And what of us to-day? What of this generation? Doubt?" he was saying. "Yes! Unbelief? That, too. New, strange beliefs, indifference, our so-called education? Yes."

He roused himself as of old to the height

of his exhortation—perspiration running in streams, his collar withered, a string upon his neck.

"Lies, abominations—all destined to quick and final downfall. Destroyed, broken, on the Precious Corner-stone—the Sure Foundation foreseen by Isaiah in his prophecy. But woe to the generation that cherishes them!

"The gospel of our Lord—the light of all men fading? Do we see it fading—going from us? Do we? Can we even dream of a world from which that light so freely given was withdrawn? Withdrawn—gone! And darkness and desolation and despair settled once again upon the eyes and souls and understanding of men. No—no!" he shouted. "Your soul recoils, and every fiber of your body. And every instinct and hope within you cries aloud, 'No. A thousand times, no—no'!"

His climax had come and gone. It was an old man's outburst of emotion—unusually strong, but soon expended. He passed on in a gentler voice, recalling the loving-kindnesses of God manifested to them always, in those years together; his salvation, unmeasured, free to all. He spoke of the passing of every man out of the heat of the day; the coming of the night, when no man works; and finally—tiredly, huskily—of the laying down of the burden upon younger, stronger shoulders. And

so on through his kindly, friendly introduction of his successor.

They seemed rather narrow shoulders that were to take the load, as they appeared in the old Gothic pulpit chair. He was very frail and shrinking—Mr. Millett. The impression of the scared look upon his face grew upon me.

Several others spoke. Dr. Spurdle, I remember, fashioned his address upon the meeting of Paul and the men of Athens before the altar of the Unknown God. He dwelt first, easily, upon Spencer's Unknowable; the hesitations of the belief of the present day—answering, smoothing over Mr. Griswold's fierce denunciations and fears. But mostly he wove his sentences about the altars of the Greeks—spoke of the meeting of faith and culture in our day. Palestine had given us duty: Greece had brought us joy. It was not too much, with our new understanding, to say that the two united in the New Testament. We must not fail, then, to thrill with the joys, the holy joys, of duty; nor be remiss in the daily performance of our joy. For, in this happy fusion of our new faith, joy was duty. Duty was great joy. He quoted, as he ended, a wordy, cloudy passage from "The Ring and the Book."

The eyes of Mr. Griswold were on him for a time. His eyebrows, I noticed, had grown more shaggy lately; his eyes gleamed out from beneath

them—for a time at Dr. Spurdle. But then they turned wearily away. They rested mostly, drawn by a compulsion he could not control, upon the figure of the youth who was to succeed him.

The end had come at last. They stood together—the array of ministers upon the platform—while the new pastor pronounced the benediction. He seemed a nice boy, but certainly frightened. His Adam's apple moved up and down in his thin neck; his voice was uneven and aspirate. I had a definite impression of him now, which never left me afterward—the image of a scared boy, trembling before Almighty Jehovah, weighed down under the tremendousness of the responsibility of the souls of his congregation placed under his charge and guidance. Beside him stood the straight, tall, bearded figure of the old minister, Mr. Griswold, held erect to its full height, with the last conscious muscular effort of a tired old man.

They gathered, naturally, around the new minister at the end of the service. Why not? It was his day, after all. And yet, it seemed melancholy to me—the sight of the figure of old Mr. Griswold slowly descending the pulpit stair alone. A big, coarsely molded figure, made strong for the ordinary uses of life, and worn with that usage—worn, and neglected finally by its users, common as an old household chair. Great hands, great feet; big,

deep, heavy-cut features. He seemed very lonely as he came down, and very weary. His eye was humid; his skin was dry. And I thought once that I saw his long upper lip tremble with weariness or emotion.

By impulse, I went forward to shake his hand. Celeste was there before me, watching, but not offering to help his slow movements. For Mr. Griswold, to the last, always resented being helped.

He stopped a moment when he faced me; then held out his great hand.

"I saw you, sir," he said. "I was glad when I saw you once again in the house of God."

I pressed his hand; but his thoughts were not on me for long.

"How did he impress you, sir—our new minister?" he asked me—with too much eagerness, I thought.

I said what I could.

And as I spoke I felt Celeste Griswold shrink back toward me. I turned and saw. It was Mrs. Judd, bringing condolences to Mr. Griswold on his retirement, and asking, with her grin of sympathy, about his wife.

"I heard she had a relapse," she said. "And I could not wait longer to ask for her. Oh, how sad, how sad that she could not be here to-day—this day, this day of wonderful peace for you!"

Some one touched me on the shoulder. It was Mr. Doty.

"Dr. Spurdle's over here. I want you to meet him," he said, and led me away.

"This is the young man I was talking about," he said to him—"the young man who lost his faith. I want you to get after him some day and show him what's what. I want you to fix him up."

Dr. Spurdle inclined his head and said he was always glad to be consulted on spiritual matters. He had the somewhat languid air of a woman's oracle, I thought. He was dressed with careful negligence. He wore a flowing tie and patent-leather shoes. And I noticed on his hand the seal ring my grandfather disliked; and his black, curly hair parted in the middle.

Mr. Doty had his hands on both our shoulders now, cementing our new union.

"I want you two to get together and talk it out. I never shall be satisfied till he has had it out with you, Calvin," he said.

It was rather embarrassing for both of us. Dr. Spurdle, having the greater control of manner, naturally ended it first by breaking away.

"Well, what do you think of him?" asked Mr. Doty.

I said I was very glad to have met him.

"A coming man," said Mr. Doty—"a coming

man. What did you think of the new man today—our Mr. Millett?"

"A nice man," I said, "but——"

"Yes," said Mr. Doty; "but——"

"Sort of scared—somehow," I said.

"That's it—scared," said Mr. Doty. "That's the word. If you ask me," said Mr. Doty, shaking his head thoughtfully, "this can't last—this can't last. Sooner or later we'll go over to the Brick Church. Sooner or later Spurdle will get us. He's a coming man."

We stood at the doorway of the White Church. Ahead of us, going down the street, Mrs. Judd was escorting Mr. Griswold and his daughter to their door. I could hear the undulating pathos of her voice as she sustained and carried on the conversation through the silence of her companions.

CHAPTER X

The Vampire

"MELANCHOLY, isn't it, kind of—" I said.

The doctor and I sat together on my side porch. Before us went the first of the sparse black file of Mr. Griswold's old prayer meeting flock on the way to the evening meeting, the last service of the day of ordination. The exercises of the day-time had exhausted the attention and interest of the great majority in the event. Only the little handful held fast for the intimate gathering of the evening.

"What?" asked the doctor absently.

"That," I said. "The old church going down."

"Yes," said the doctor indifferently. "Melancholy, but not unusual."

"No, I suppose not," I said, and glanced over at him as he sat looking down the street, the atheist, the spiritual bogie-man of my childhood—the man who had lived in this new, material Universe of unbelief, whose border I had just crossed from my old supernatural Universe of belief, all his

life, much longer than I could remember. How did the changes that I thought I saw appear from his standpoint? Did he see, as I believed I was seeing, a general lapse in the Christian faith? If so, how did it affect him?

"It's fading everywhere, isn't it?" I ventured.

"What is?" asked the doctor, looking curiously at me, the wrinkles gathering in the corners of his eyes—those eyes of a kindly Mephistopheles, wise with half a century of the knowledge of good and evil.

"Religion," I said; "the vital interest in Christianity."

"Yes, in a way," said the doctor irresponsively. He seemed to be watching something down the street.

But then he turned and looked at me.

"Have you set a date for the termination of the Christian faith?" he inquired.

"Scarcely," I said, hardening into an attitude of mental self-defense. For the light of mocking was kindled in his eye again. "Scarcely. But it is changing. Yes, disintegrating—faster than it ever did before, isn't it? It's got to now, hasn't it, with all we know—with all we are learning—faster and faster?"

I stopped. He was looking at me with keen amusement in his eyes, the crow's-feet of laughter gathered in their corners.

"All the signs of disintegration are on it now," I said a little hotly. "You can't deny that!"

"Youth, Calvin, youth!" he answered me. "New worlds for breakfast every morning. And all the planets exploding about your ears every night. One date only for all events—now; if not to-day, to-morrow morning!"

I kept silence before his mockery.

"My son," he said, his voice changing, "you alarm yourself unnecessarily. They will be using Christian rites for marriages and funerals long after this New England weather rubs our names off our tombstones."

He turned his eyes away from me, up the street again.

"What do you think religion is, with the average man?" he asked me over his shoulder. "A passion of the soul, a great supernatural emotion?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," I said, a little sulky from his raillery. "What is it?"

"It's a social habit with most men, my boy, that's all—handed down from mother to son, like table manners. It's only with the abnormal, with the cranks, old Griswold or yourself," he said,—"cranks, and women sometimes—that it grips the soul. The rest of us——"

He spoke more and more absently. Then he stopped. He was watching some one, certainly.

"The old ghoul," he said.

"Who?" I asked.

And then I saw a familiar figure down the street.

"She's scented death again," said the Doctor.

It was Mrs. Judd.

"Watch her," said the doctor. "She's coming here."

Sure enough. She stopped at the head of our walk, wavered like a hound undecided upon his scent, and came up toward us at last.

"I knew it," murmured the doctor, rising. "She couldn't help it, as soon as she saw me here."

"Good evening, doctor," came the thin, lachrymose voice. "Excuse me for interrupting, won't you? But I could not go by without asking you how poor Mrs. Griswold is getting on. Is she as low, Doctor—oh, is she as low as they say she is?"

"Mrs. Judd," said the doctor very solemnly, "if I tell you the exact state of this case, can I count upon your aid?"

"Yes, yes," said the woman eagerly.

"I knew I could," the doctor answered in a tone of exaggerated deference. "I knew I could. She is a sick woman, Mrs. Judd."

Mrs. Judd gave a little gasp of pleasurable pity.

"Your quick sympathies can aid her greatly, Mrs. Judd," said the doctor.

"How, how?" asked Mrs. Judd, eager to serve.

"One of the things she must have now is quiet," said the doctor. "I must forbid her being seen by any one—even you. Will you tell that, Mrs. Judd, to the neighbors—to whoever asks?"

"Certainly, doctor, certainly. Oh, isn't it terrible, Doctor?" said Mrs. Judd.

"You'll be careful to remember this," said the doctor, "won't you—because it is so very necessary. Absolute quiet is essential now to keep her living."

"Oh, yes—oh, yes, doctor; you know I will," said Mrs. Judd, passing on to prayer meeting.

"To-morrow morning she'll be there, just the same," the doctor told me.

Mrs. Judd's figure disappeared into the entrance of the church. She was late. The singing began at once in the vestry, and the sound of old voices in prayer.

"Is she so sick?" I asked, concerning Celeste's mother.

"She can't last long now," said the doctor.

"I didn't know," I said. "She's been that way so long."

"Not much longer," said the doctor.

"Look," he said, with a change of voice.

From across the street a pink figure was passing the house of the Griswolds.

"There's another one," said the doctor.

"I didn't know she went there," I said.

Miss Avery was at the Griswolds' door.

"Only when old Griswold is out. Prayer meeting nights always," said the doctor. "Sickness is their opportunity, naturally," added the doctor —speaking of the "women who smiled."

"Where is that Mrs. Thursby now?" I asked. We had reached the intermittent stage of conversation of a still summer's night.

"Dead," said the doctor. "Haven't you heard?"

"No," I said.

"Cancer."

"No!" I exclaimed.

"Oh, yes. Didn't you know that?" asked the Doctor. "That's what ailed her when she was here. That's what got her into it."

Miss Avery came from the door again.

"Woman's business," mused the doctor, watching her. "Strange thing to watch, isn't it—the stir among the women just before the passing of another life, in a little place like this?"

I had no answer.

"I've watched them years and years, now. They sense it far ahead. The men never—not until it happens. Men—they make me laugh, with

their superior airs. Food-hunters, that's all! Two-thirds of life is in the women's hands—all the real crises."

We sat silent again.

"'From women we come forth; to women we go back to die. At each gate of life sits a woman waiting.' Is that it—do you remember?" said the doctor.

"I don't know it," I answered.

"India, I think," said the doctor; "not Greece."

"I never heard it," I said.

The prayer meeting was over. The slow black flock filed out of church again, Mrs. Judd among them. She approached our walk.

"She's coming in again," said the doctor.

She turned as he spoke—advanced self-consciously, her eyes down, till she reached the porch's side.

"Just a word," said Mrs. Judd—"just a word, Doctor. I wanted to ask you: If I go to the door, just to the door, to call on Celeste and ask for her dear mother—if I can help her, it can do no harm, can it?"

"Yes, it can," said the doctor brusquely. "No calling whatsoever now."

"Oh, very well, very well," said Mrs. Judd, somewhat injured. "I only wanted to ask; I only wanted to do my duty.

"Just one thing more," she went on, moistening her lips. "Just one thing more. I wanted to ask you this. If they had been able—if they had had the means to send her away to another climate, as they hoped—would it have been different? Would it have saved her?"

The street light, from where I stood, shone for a second on her glassy blue eyes.

"Probably," said the Doctor; "if she had been sent in time."

"Oh, isn't that terrible—terrible!" wailed Mrs. Judd. "Isn't it inscrutable? Are not God's ways inscrutable? That poor, dear woman, the wife of God's servant, dying here, you might say, from the lack of means to live. And all around us so many unconsecrated lives saved. Isn't it past finding out—past finding out?"

She went away, intoxicated with a new grief.

"She'll be there to-morrow morning," said the doctor again, "knocking at the door. She can't keep away. She must handle death continually. Her fingers itch for it.

"Damn her!" he said suddenly. His unaccustomed heat astonished me. "What can you do with her? You can't shoot her. Nothing short of that will keep her away. You talk of physical causes for disease. Imagine it: put yourself in the position—dying, with that unclean thing whining every morning at your door, waiting.

She's got my patient in such a state now that just to hear her voice at the doorway starts up a paroxysm of coughing."

"And nothing to be done?" I asked.

"Nothing that we can do," said the doctor. "Oh, I tell you, my young materialistic friend, the Christian Scientists have got you, after all. Three-quarters of our deaths are mental murders——"

My mind returned to my grandmother's last days.

"——or mental suicides," the doctor was saying.

"No," he went on; "you and I can do nothing. The defense from such attacks must be only by a woman—another woman. This time by that girl of theirs—Celeste."

His eyes looked shrewdly into mine.

"She can do it, I think," he said. "Yes; she'll do it."

He stopped.

"At each gate—a woman," he repeated, musing. "We can thank God for it, most of us—whatever God may be—for the one woman that waits for us—at last. I've seen it so many, many times."

We both were silent again.

"What a thing a woman is!" he said, at last. "What a vital creature! How her instincts and emotions reach down and take hold on life—on

the roots of it. Take that girl of the minister's. She's worth just twenty of us—of you and me. We fuss, and speculate, and play with our little shadows of life. She's a living creature. All the great forces of the race live through her. Think of her. She's scarcely more than a young girl to-day. But I've been watching her now for ten years, fighting, fighting, fighting for the protection of her own flesh and blood. Nature—instinct; that's all. But yet, we don't see, very often, a specimen like that."

He started to go away.

"Yes," he said; "we can't interfere. That's women's business. They'll have to fight it out between themselves."

"An awful thing," I said, thinking of all he had said to me—of Celeste.

"What?" he asked.

"The women," I said. "All this silent struggle for life here. A strange thing to see as it really is."

"Strange?" said the doctor, leaving. "Nonsense. A rule of life—universal. You look out of your window now, and see the women fighting for their wounded and their dying and their dead, exactly like the women of the Iliad—exactly: there in the warfare of barbarians; and here—in this dead place here—against the slow, septic poisoning of dry-rot."

I walked with him when he went down the street, and left him for a longer walk. As I came back I saw again the light in Celeste's room in the Griswold house. All the rest was dark. How many times, it came to me, had I seen that one light watching from that dark house!

For several days, then, I saw the women going back and forth from the house of the Griswolds—with flowers, with covered dishes. Mrs. Judd was there—exactly as the doctor said—the earliest possible moment the next morning. Twice a day, for two days, she went and came—making very short stops. On the morning of the third day she made a little longer one. When she came back her face was very red; she seemed to be talking to herself.

That was Thursday. I remember, because the windows in the vestry of the White Church were lighted again that night for the weekly prayer meeting—because it was that night that I saw Celeste Griswold again.

I was coming through the yard that evening. I had been taking a look at the small experiment in my makeshift laboratory. The evening service was under way. I could hear them singing. I looked up, and there was a white figure before me. I saw that it was Celeste Griswold. She had come, apparently, by the old back path behind the church which we had used as children.

She startled me a little when I saw her—she seemed so pale. Her face was that dead white of a frozen person's.

"Calvin," she said, in a low, aspirate whisper. "Calvin!"

"Yes, Celeste," I said, hurrying to her. I thought there was probably some crisis in her mother's sickness.

She stood straight and still. Only her lack of color and her wide eyes showed emotion.

"Tell me, is she going to die?" she asked—"my mother?

"Don't," she said, when I started to avoid her. "I've come to you to get the truth. I always have."

Eventually I told her. It had less effect upon her than I had thought. She remained exactly as she seemed at first—numb, as if gripped with cold.

"One thing more," she said evenly. "If she had gone away, if we had had the money to send her when we wanted to so much, would she have lived?"

We stood beside the White Church—just back of the light from the last window of the vestry. A prayer was beginning, in the rapt voice of the bearded man who prayed. His strained accents came out the open windows to us.

"Oh, God, we thank thee—" he began.

I tried not to answer her. "I don't know—"

I began. But I saw that it did not satisfy her; I could not make my voice convincing. "Yes," I had to say at last.

She stood silent for the moment. The voice of the bearded prayer-maker came through the silence.

"And, oh, God, we rejoice," he was saying, "in all——"

"It *was* true," Celeste Griswold said absently, "just as she told me—just as she said."

"Who?" I asked her.

"That woman—that awful Judd woman—that vampire!" said Celeste Griswold sharply. "She will not come back," she added curtly, her mouth set.

The man who prayed had passed to the regulation second phase of his rhapsody, his thanksgiving for mercy: "renewed, renewed, continually renewed," his voice came swelling out.

Suddenly Celeste Griswold broke down, shaken with weeping. I had never seen her break before, uncontrollably, like this. Then, just as suddenly, she stopped. The prayer in the church was done. The services seemed to be over. The place was silent.

"I don't believe it," she said, her hands clenched. "I don't believe it. My mother—my poor, gentle mother!"

They were leaving the church now. I could see them in the street, walking under the lights.

"Think of her life! Poverty, and deprivation, and sickness—year after year, always. But always cheerful—always kind. It was her form of serving God. Just as high, just as true, as my father's; just exactly."

There was nothing I could say to her.

"And now, because of it—because, when she could have been saved to me—if they had paid us what they should——"

She stopped; her eyes dilated. I could see them, even in that half-light.

"Do you know what that would mean?" she asked fiercely. "Do you understand? It is the White Church—the service of God—God himself—that would kill her!"

It was suddenly darker; the lights had gone out in the church vestry.

"In torture, in agony—in those awful fits of coughing. Oh, if you saw her!"

She stopped again, then went on:

"No, no! I don't believe it—I don't believe it. I don't believe there is a God who would do such a thing. It won't happen; it can't! But—" she stopped—"if it does," she went on, "if it does—I couldn't believe there was a God, that's all. I couldn't. Never—never again."

She spoke crisply, evenly, her voice as expressionless as a voice in a dream.

"Celeste," I said, after a silence. I took her listless hand. "Think—isn't there anything I can do? Can't you let me do something to help her—to help you?"

"What can you do—now?" she asked dully.

"I don't know," I said impotently, and was still.

"Listen, Celeste, please," I said at last, for she was very clearly not thinking of me, or of what I said. "If you ever need me—if I can ever help you, you will call me—wherever I may be."

"If I ever need you," repeated Celeste absently, and stopped.

"Oh, yes," she went on, her speech quickening a little. "I should do that anyway."

I don't think she knew what she was saying. She was entirely preoccupied with her grief and rebellion.

We stood silent for a very little time. Then, back of us, from the Griswolds' house there came a voice calling: "Celestia, Celestia."

"My father," said Celeste, loosening her hand from mine.

"Celestia, Celestia," came the old voice again.

"I won't believe it," said Celeste Griswold hurriedly. "There is a God—there is a God! He will not let that happen to my mother."

"Celestia, Celestia," came the old voice a third time.

"Yes, father," she called back. "Coming."

Her voice was perfectly sure again—loud enough so that it seemed he should have heard it. But still he called for her again: "Celestia, Celestia."

It was like the voice of the past calling her away from me.

Once more I saw her—and only once—before I left: in a formal call upon her and her father. Early the next week I was on my way to Germany.

CHAPTER XI

This Is None Other but the House of God.

THE next year, that one year of mine in Germany, was a busy one, perhaps the busiest and most interesting of my life. It was not only that I was occupied in work which held fast my attention. More than that, much, it was the transition, the being born again into that new universe of modern science; a place of new landmarks, and new perspectives, inhabited by men who could scarcely think of the Universe of my childhood, the teaching of the White Church as something still extant upon the earth.

And yet, though I myself was rapidly becoming acclimated to the new environment, never have I been under stronger or happier emotion than when I was returning once again that next summer to the old Street; when the rattling, decrepit, branch train jerked its cars around the tortuous curves, and I saw rising in the distance the dim, old-blue mountains I had fished through, when I was a boy.

There was one curve, just before we arrived, as the top of the grade was passed, when you

could look across, and see the spire of the White Church surmounting the elm trees. There, I remembered, was where, coming back, I had always had the first sense of home. I stepped across the half-empty car and looked. I could not see the spire. I looked again—in vain. Then the train rattled on, and the viewpoint was gone.

It was a dark day. Very likely, I thought, the spire showed less brightly than on the sunny one, and so I had missed catching it. But when I came into the Street again, and the trolley stopped before it, I saw that, as a matter of fact, the White Church was gone, and gone forever. They had painted it brown—a dirty brown.

I had, I remember, a feeling of sinking and regret—the feeling that you have when something in your past life is irrevocably gone; the main underlying sentiment, I think, at the time of loss by death. But here was a death, not of an individual, but a generation, a race of men and women.

I stopped, and gazed at the little box of a brown church; tried to call back again the great White Church of my childhood; the high pillars, where overhead the pigeons cooed and chuckled somewhere out of sight; the House of God. Then beside the main entrance my eye fell upon the announcement:

"Tonight. Holy Ghost Night! Come!"

I gazed, wide-eyed, at the neatly stenciled letters; read, and read again, and still was reading, when behind me, I finally realized that a gentle voice was speaking:

"Why! How do you do? How do you do?" said the voice, in a somewhat guttural tone. "This is indeed a pleasure, Mr. Morgan. Back, I see, from your researches abroad."

It was Mr. Millett, the young minister, disclosing to the full his quick, frightened smile.

"I see you are looking at the old church," he said. "Do you think it improved by the change?"

"No," I said. "I do not."

"No," said Mr. Millett, "personally I should have preferred the white. But it seemed to be the feeling with many that brown would be better. It is more durable; more wearable, so to say." And he smiled again his fleeting, apologetic smile.

"Pardon me. I must go now," he said. He was always begging your pardon; always in transit.

"What is that?" I asked, pointing to the sign above the door.

"That—oh, that is our revival service—the notice of it, I had intended to say," said Mr. Millett. "You see," he went on, explaining again, "we have felt we needed a spiritual awakening

here. The interest was not quite what we desired.

"Pardon me. I must be going," he said suddenly again. "I must be going in to prepare for it. This is the last evening. I hope—I wish we might see you there," he added doubtfully.

He passed along, with quick light steps; his long coat fluttered into the back entrance of the church.

I turned toward my own house, and there, of course, across the lawn, sat Mr. Tubbs, the organist, upon his porch. I had hoped to escape him. But it was impossible. He sat like fate, a village deity, regarding the comings and goings of the Street. Life and death passed before him; and all new-comers were his by right of prior discovery.

"Well, well," said Mr. Tubbs, "here you are again. Back from Dutchland. Well, well, how is the Kaiser—huh?"

"Hello," I said. "How are you? I see you've been out painting up the church."

"Pretty good job, too," said Mr. Tubbs. "Looks pretty nifty, don't it? Everybody got awful tired of that old white. It dirtied up so, too. It looks rich for a change, that brown, don't it?

"Coming to the revival tonight?" he went on, when I didn't answer. "This is your last chance,

if you're going to be saved—if you're going to get your button."

I looked over and saw that new order that he wore, next to the Odd-Fellows' links upon his lapel—that unspeakable button, white, with a blue inscription: "Advertise Jesus."

"They're giving them away to all the church members—new ones, and old ones, too," said Mr. Tubbs.

"Great doings, great doings," proceeded Mr. Tubbs—"lively times. They've had me most dead. They would have, if they hadn't brought their own trombonist with them. Pentecost Brown—you've heard of him," said Mr. Tubbs, looking up. "A good one, too."

"Who's the evangelist?" I asked.

"Sam Shipes—the Gospel Tornado—you've heard of him; you see him in the newspapers. We wouldn't have got him only by a piece of luck."

"How's that?" I asked.

"Doty got him. He met him somewhere on the train when he was traveling, and they got well acquainted. So Doty got him to come up here. It isn't what they're used to—a little church like this one. It's kind of a vacation for them.

"A smart fellow, that Shipes—you ought to hear him," went on Mr. Tubbs. "They say he makes good money out of it. And there's some of

them that criticises him for it. But I don't see it. That's his business, ain't it, just the same as anybody else's? Let him have it, I say, if he makes it honest. And I don't know any honester way than saving souls. A smart feller; a smart feller," said Mr. Tubbs. "He stirs 'em up!"

"How does Mr. Griswold like it?" I asked.

"Like it," said Mr. Tubbs, "the old crank. He don't like anything up-to-date. That's what's the matter with our churches," added Mr. Tubbs, becoming didactic—"these old timers like him hanging on."

"He fought it, eh?" I said.

"Yes. But they brought him around finally," said Mr. Tubbs. "Doty brought him around. He went right to him, and told him he'd have to agree to it, if they were going to save the church. He told him straight that if he didn't, it'd be his own responsibility."

"Say, you ought to see the old codger," he went on. "He's changed a lot since last year—got kind of sour and disagreeable. I tell 'em he's a little off. About Sundays—about Sundays in particular. Why, just last Sunday afternoon our baseball nine were playing against North Palmer over here in Hathaway's lot. And what do you think! Who comes over but old man Griswold, shaking his cane, and trying to break up the game—right after the third inning."

"Did he, though?" I exclaimed.

"Yes. He's stalking around like that all the time now—every Sunday. You'd think, the way he acts, he thought he was the last Christian on earth," said Mr. Tubbs warmly.

"They didn't use to play ball here much Sundays in the old days," I suggested.

"No, but we've got out of that generation now. Times are different," said Mr. Tubbs.

"No—the old man's crazy in my opinion," he added. "And getting crazier every day."

"They're still having a hard time with the church, are they?" I asked.

"You're right. They are," said Mr. Tubbs, settling himself back again into his rocker. "Yep, the old church is pretty hard up," he said reflectively. "I don't see how they'll pull it out, if this revival don't work out something."

I passed along home.

"They've tried most everything else," he was saying. "This little minister's been a great one for that—sociables, and Browning readings, and Boy Campers. He had a Man's Forward movement for a while, and that didn't work either."

I was getting out of ear shot cross the lawn.

"Well, good-by," said Mr. Tubbs, interrupting himself. "You want to be there tonight. It's your last night."

I was there, one of the first. By habit, I got again into our old pew.

The ministers came from the platform, one after another. Sam Shipes was on hand early—an active, confident, wiry man, with the smooth shaven, deep-marked face of a vaudeville actor. He wore a blue serge suit, patent leather shoes, and a blue bow tie, with white polka dots. A handkerchief with a blue border showed from his upper coat pocket. There was a diamond ring upon his hand.

Pentecost Brown, the trombonist, was also early—a small figure, with a peculiar, mouse-like appearance, that side whiskers would give to a little small-featured man.

Mr. Millett came next, giving his quick, apologetic smile to the evangelist and to several in the audience. And last of all, Mr. Griswold tramped heavily up the old steps, bowed gravely to the men upon the platform, and sat down. Celeste Griswold, who had come with him to the step, went back to her old pew.

There was an obvious reluctance, it seemed to me, a heavy weight upon the old man's movements, in his attitude, as he sat there, eyes down. I said to myself, I remember, that it was my imagination. But very soon, I learned that there were others who saw the same thing that I did.

The church filled up quite well. It was Satur-

day night—the last night of the services. In front of me were four young girls—from the Village, I think. At any rate, I did not know them. I could hear their whisperings quite clearly.

"Isn't he funny?" said the pretty one of the party.

"Who?"

"That old man," she said. "What's he mad about anyhow? Gee, don't he look like a thunder cloud?"

"S-sh," said the proper one of the party—the thin one with glasses.

"Say, girls, look at his upper lip. Did you ever see such a long lip in your life?" said the prettiest girl.

They giggled.

"Oh, Min, you are the worst," said one.

"Honestly," said the wit. "Did you see it a little while ago? It kind of wiggled. Honestly, I mean it."

"S-sh," said the proper one again. "Don't you know where you are?"

So after a little while they stopped giggling, and patted the backs of their necks, and were still again.

I noticed then that what they said was true.

The old man's lip did seem to tremble a little occasionally—from weakness, I suppose. His hands shook somewhat, I saw, when he took them

from where they rested on the arms of the old pulpit chair. He did look pretty melancholy—yes, and crabbed, I suppose, to the other people.

I glanced over to where Celeste Griswold sat. I could see that affairs had gone no better with either of them. Her mother had died during the year. She was still in black, which made her whiter than she would have been in some other color.

But now the service had begun. Pentecost Brown was sounding his trombone and we were rising to sing the hymn which had been, as I learned later, the keynote of the success of the week:

"Roll us, roll us, Savior, to the Gloryland above;
Wash us, wash us, Jesus, with the cleansing of Thy love."

Mr. Griswold, I noticed, did not sing—as he quite often used to. He stood up, his hymn book open in his big palm, staring rather absently at it. His clothing was more shiny than it ever was, I thought. His hair was a little long and unkempt.

They prayed, and sang again; and then, in a very crisp and business-like manner, Sam Shipes, the Evangelist, began getting under way—starting slowly, working up in the friendly, breezy, vernacular of the Middle West:

"Folks, when I was a boy in Michigan—way out on the farm in Michigan—my good old mother used to say to me:

" 'Sammy, you'll never get right with your Savior, till you get straight down on your marrow-bones, and pray till He sends you down the Holy Ghost. And you've got to get at it pretty quick—or you know who'll get you.'

" You bet I knew before she told me. But Mother told me just the same, 'For the old devil's watching you, Sammy. He's on your track. The sooner you get right, the safer it will be for you.' "

The restless girls in front of me gave little appreciative giggles. Mr. Griswold, I thought, moved slightly in his chair.

" It's that old devil," called Mr. Shipes, warming, " that same old devil, sitting out there, waiting, waiting, to grab you up. That's the same old devil who's been sitting outside there, for six thousand years, waiting for us all. That same old bunco steerer, that got talking to our grandmother, Miss Eve, before she took out her marriage certificate, and became Mrs. Adam.

" Now there are some people," said Mr. Shipes, " will tell you there ain't any such thing as a personal devil; but I for one ain't ashamed to say that I believe in him. Well, no, I don't believe in him. I know he's there! "

He was off now upon the personal devil, for several minutes. My mind wandered a little, in spite of his fierce and vivid rhetoric. My eyes came back quite often to the figure of Mr. Gris-

wold—his hands fixed upon the arms of the pulpit chair, his head down, his eyes entirely hidden by his shaggy eyebrows.

Above him, I read again, as I had a thousand times before, the semicircular old gilt motto in its Gothic letters:

This is None Other but the House of God

The gilt was pretty dull now; the long tail of a water stain hung down to it from the ceiling.

The speaker gradually worked up to the subject of the evening. He was now expatiating upon the Holy Ghost. I saw Mr. Griswold change his position—shift his heavy feet, apparently steadying himself as the man started.

"Now there's lots of people, nowadays," said Mr. Shipes, "seem to think there ain't any such thing as the Holy Ghost any longer. They think it's out of date. They'll come right out and tell you so—or they might as well."

I saw Mr. Griswold lean forward tense, gripping the arms of his chair, waiting.

"But I tell you, folks, they're wrong. They're wrong," shouted Sam Shipes, pacing back and forth upon the platform. "And my good old friend here, Mr. Griswold, will tell you the same thing."

The old man looked up quickly. Then his figure relaxed back into the chair.

"Now, folks, let's get together," said the Evangelist; "let's try to think it out. Let's see it just the way it happened.

"Here was our Savior crucified, hanging on the cross."

He backed up against the rear wall of the platform, his arms extended. Mr. Shipes crucified —crucified in a blue serge suit and a polka dot tie and a diamond upon his left hand.

"Crucified, suffering!" he whispered.

His eyes turned up, his head lopped down.

I saw Mr. Griswold lean forward, tense, gripping his chair arms again.

And still the Gospel Tornado kept on—passed to his illustrations of the Holy Ghost.

"Now after he got over with that—after he'd gone through with it; gone up, up there, back to glory—who was it came to take His place on earth with us poor miserable, insignificant sinners? Who was it? Who was it? The Holy Ghost," yelled Mr. Shipes. "The Holy Ghost —that's who it was!"

"They say to me: What do you mean. Holy Ghost? What do you mean? What is it? I tell you, folks, it's fire, it's water, it's blood, it's life —it's the glory hallelujah of the sanctified soul! I tell you, folks, you've got to get it—you've got to get it, or go yellin' down to your damnation."

The veins stood out on Mr. Griswold's

yellow forehead. I could see them from where I stood.

"Now look, now look, then, folks; look, and watch me close while I say it. For this thirty seconds may mean more to you than any time in all your life. It may mean to you an eternity of joy and bliss—or everlasting years of squirming in Hell fire."

The evangelist talked louder and faster.

"You've got to get it, folks; you've got to have it. You've got to have it to be saved! It's got to come and strike you blind, like it did old Paul on his way down to Damascus.

He jumped into the air at that, with a sudden yell.

"Oh, smite us, Lord; smite us with the Spirit here tonight!" he called.

Results were coming. I heard the bearded man who prayed calling, very softly at first, Hallelujah from the audience. The old gaunt woman, who peered into the Hereafter, sat, happy tears streaming down her cheeks.

"Shoot us, shoot us!" yelled Sam Shipes. "Shoot us dead, God, with your Holy Ghost tonight!"

I saw it just before it came. Mr. Griswold was half up on his feet—his finger pointing.

"Now, this won't do! This—this is blasphemy," he said. "This——"

Then suddenly he collapsed back again into the big chair.

Fortunately his voice was not so loud as it once was. What he said was not very plain. I don't know that I myself could have understood it if I had not had my attention at the time upon him.

His daughter was on her feet. I was myself. She glanced a fraction of a second at me. It was the first time our eyes had met. I went up to the platform after her.

The speaker fortunately was at the height of his effort, shouting. He did not notice the interruption, or didn't care to notice it. He went on with his wild apostrophe to the Holy Ghost. Celeste Griswold and I helped the old man down the stairs—out of the side aisle. There was much less disturbance than might have been expected. Mr. Millett indeed came across the platform, and started to help us. But Celeste refused his aid.

"It's nothing," she said. "Nothing but what we can manage," she said. "Is it, father?"

"No," the old man said thickly.

"A little dizziness, that's all. He has it occasionally," said Celeste. "That's all. And if anyone asks please tell them so."

The old man was pretty heavy—one side particularly, the right side, which was toward me. It seemed to me to drag a little, but he kept trying

to walk alone—to be free, especially from the aid of Celeste upon his other arm.

"I don't want you to, Celestia, don't. You're tiring yourself again. I can get along," he was saying.

So she supported him more lightly.

"You see, my daughter," he kept saying to me. "You see, this girl is all the time doing more than she should for me. I try not to be a care to her, sir," he said. "I do try——"

"Father—please——" Celeste was trying to interrupt him. But without success.

"I do try," he went on, a little peevishly. "But she will over-exert herself for me. I don't like it. I will not be a drag, a tax on anybody. But I'm afraid; I'm afraid all the time——" He was a little out of his self-control, I saw. He didn't know what he was saying. He shivered a little and stopped.

We walked on in slow silence. From out the windows of the church came the height of the Evangelist's calling.

"Oh, shoot—shoot—shoot 'em dead!" he was shouting.

The groans were increasing from the audience. The noise attracted Mr. Griswold's attention again.

"This won't do; this won't do," he started muttering. His mind didn't seem very clear.

But then the stimulus passed out of his brain, and he was silent again. He was frightfully thin, I thought, as I grasped his arm—weazened to bone and gristle. But what a huge man he was still. He got very heavy leaning away from Celeste toward me.

We got him finally to the house. We were pretty slow. They were playing, by the time we got there, the song which followed the exhortation. The bleat of the trombone came across the still street, and we heard the congregation singing that song I had not heard before until then:

"My good old Mother's Bible is good enough for me."

They were still singing it, when we helped Mr. Griswold upstairs to his old bedroom, and he lay down heavily upon the creaking, high, old-fashioned bed.

"You are kind, sir," he said to me. "You are very kind." Then his eyes closed heavily.

I went away for the doctor. They were praying in the church when we hurried back together.

The doctor was upstairs for some time. I waited in the old library. Then finally we came away together. Celeste would let us do nothing more for her. And in fact the doctor reassured her about her father's condition.

"He's trying to have a little stroke, I think," he said to me as we went away together. "His

arteries are old; he's been under a long nervous strain. But he'll be all right tonight—and probably for some time."

It was, as a matter of fact, just what he had thought—but with a little more after effect than he had first expected. From that time on, there was that little hitch in Mr. Griswold's walk; that invisible ball and chain which he dragged after him, until the day he died.

The services, naturally, that last night, were long. They were singing again their chief song: "Roll us, roll us, Savior," when we came out of the door of the old parsonage. We stopped a moment on the walk and listened.

"They do it better on the Congo," said the doctor.

The rhythmic rolling of the song came out across the silent air—the trombone leading.

"Much better," said the doctor. "They use the drum. It sets them dancing quicker."

They began coming out soon after, some of the first of them, bearing on their lapels that awful button that Mr. Tubbs had worn.

They were talking, I knew, some of them, about Mr. Griswold's attack. But strangely enough there hadn't many of them noticed it. The voice and gestures of the Evangelist had focussed their attention. What few had seen the old man leave, were not alarmed by the occurrence. Mr. Millett

had assured them that it was of no serious consequence.

And now the doctor gave a second assurance that all was right, to the groups that met us.

"That's right," said the Doctor to me after. "Oh, he'll come out all right. He's tough."

I saw the doctor at the door. He wasn't very talkative. He was tired, I think. He had had a long day. We were both thinking, more than talking.

We came to his yard at last.

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem," said the doctor "thou that killest the Prophets!"

He paused.

"Christianity! Good God!" he broke out suddenly. "I wouldn't treat an old dog the way these churches treat their broken down ministers."

I had never heard him speak as bitterly before.

CHAPTER XII

The Dead Prophets

I WENT away three days after that, and was gone for two months. The development of the newer biological work of this country, which has grown of such importance now, was already well under way then. And a particular opportunity for apprenticeship and study had brought me back from Germany to New York. I was there in the city through that summer. And it was September before I came back again to the old Street; before I had that unexpected visit from Mr. Griswold.

It was the morning after the day I arrived. I was looking out a window, across the lawn towards the church, when I saw the figure of the old man emerge from the rear door—the door into the vestry. He hesitated, looked around, especially towards the street. Then started walking across our lawn. I was naturally surprised. Never since my grandfather's days had he been inside my house. And never, that I could remember, had I seen him coming by that way—across the lawn.

He did not see me from where I stood. I watched him in his slow advance, with his cane—sidling a little, dragging that invisible ball and chain, which his illness had fastened on him. It was depressing, very, to see it for the first time—the clogged progress of that big, powerful, free-moving figure I had seen from childhood go striding by our door. It hesitated again for a moment near the house, choosing between the front and back way. And finally, to my still greater mystification, turned toward the back. I passed through the house to our side porch to meet him, and was there when he came.

He stood at the foot of the steps a moment, looking up at me.

"Good morning, Mr. Morgan," he said. "Are you at leisure?"

"Certainly," I said, and welcomed him as warmly as I knew how.

He clambered slowly up the steps, sideways, as a little child does.

"I am awkward," he said.

"There's plenty of time," I assured him, and we said no more, until he reached the top of the steps, and we shook hands.

He was strong enough, when he had come up—though pretty slow. We went into the house, the old sitting room, the place where he had always been received by my grandfather. The room

was just as it had been, except for the usual morbid desire of my old New England housekeeper to shut and cover everything up.

The two great steel engravings, which furnished the touch of majesty desired in the sixties to my grandfather's chief room, dominated the place. The smell of the bunches of pampas grass, from the high red vases on the mantelpiece, had saturated the close air. I opened a window and pushed up the shades a little higher for more light.

Mr. Griswold, by force of habit, had settled himself in the old black armchair he had always occupied. I could almost feel, as he sat there, his great bony knee at my back again, as when he had drawn me toward him when a boy. He sat for a moment; his eyes passed once around the room in silence. Then he addressed himself to me.

"We are not liable to be overheard here?" he asked, and looked around again.

"No," I said.

"No; I thought not," he said heavily, and paused a moment, his hands supported upon his ivory-headed cane. His temples seemed even hollower than before, I noticed. His legs tapered off, thin and shrunken, just above the knee, as they often do in very old men. There was a big tear, very neatly darned, in his trouser leg.

"I have come to advise with you," he said slowly, "upon a matter of business."

"Yes," I said.

"I have determined," he said, "to sell my library," and paused.

"Oh, have you," I exclaimed, and waited for him.

"Yes," said Mr. Griswold. And stopped quite a little time.

"I believed you would be willing to give me the benefit of your knowledge," he went on.

"More than willing, Mr. Griswold," I said. "If I have any."

"You have, I think," he said.

He laid by his cane then, beside his chair; felt in his inner coat pocket, and brought out some folded sheets of note paper.

"I have here," he said, displaying them, "a list of the volumes. In matters of this kind, we cannot be too business-like."

"No," I said.

He handed them to me. I looked over, rather helplessly, the scrawled, aged writing.

"I have taken this list myself," he explained. "In one column, you will see, are the volumes by titles—fourteen hundred and sixty, as I remember it."

"Fourteen hundred and sixty-three," I said.

"Yes. On the other column I have put their cost to me approximately. You see it?"

"Yes."

"Fifteen hundred and fifty dollars—about—estimated, you understand. I could not be exact—not over so great a lapse of time."

"Of course not," I said.

"This library was completed a good many years ago. I was a young man at that time. It was before my marriage. Since then I have not been able to save much for such matters."

He stopped for a while, gazing across the room.

"No," he said, rousing himself.

"Now in the first place, we must not deceive ourselves," he went on. "We must not over-estimate the value of this collection. Many of these volumes are quite old—their bindings are old."

"Yes, of course," I said, trying to say something. "But there might be——"

"Yes," interrupted the old man, his eyes lighting. "I think I catch your drift, sir; I think I can understand what you are going to say. There might be volumes there of some value for that reason."

"Yes," I said.

"Exactly. Have you ever had any experience or knowledge in this line, may I ask?" he said, looking expectantly into my eyes.

"No," I said, "I'm afraid not."

"No," said Mr. Griswold. "No; I see. It would not be in your line of experience." But he was visibly disappointed.

"Some rare books, of course, become in time very valuable," he said.

"Extremely so," I said.

"Well, we could scarcely expect that. We must not deceive ourselves," said Mr. Griswold. "That's absolutely essential."

"No," I said. And there was a little silence.

"I know this," said Mr. Griswold, suddenly breaking it. "I know many visiting clergymen have told me that a number of my books were now quite rare. That they would greatly like to have them, themselves."

"I can imagine it," I said.

"However," he went on, at last, "that is problematical at best. We must not count much on it."

"Perhaps not," I said.

He had taken his list from me again, and was turning it over.

"My books; my books," he said absently.

"Now here," he said, going on, "here are my autograph copies." He went silent staring at the page. "I have quite a number of them—a shelf by themselves. Here are two full pages, you see." He stopped again. "You may remember them," he said.

"Yes, sir," I said. I did.

"I was fortunate in being acquainted with many of the foremost Christian writers in my

day. I had copies directly from them themselves —or through their influence. Here is one, for instance—by Mark Hopkins—sent personally. Another by Doctor J. Pye Smith, the great Christian writer on geology—not so well known today, perhaps. But a man of great erudition. And others. One, even, from Henry Ward Beecher." He glanced up under his thick eyebrows at me.

"Indeed," I said.

"Yes," he said, "and others. Doctor S. Clarke also. And John Brown, the great authority on exegesis and hermeneutics. And the widely-known John Kitto. Yes, these should be worth something. They should count for something."

"I should think so," I said warmly.

"And then, of course, there are the standard books—Edwards on the Will; the works of Ewald and others—a long list of them."

"I see," I said, looking at the pages he pointed to.

"About the others, we might easily deceive ourselves," he went on. "But here, I believe, we are on more solid ground. I have found it always an excellent working library for a minister."

"Yes. Yes. Here are my books," he said, turning over his list slowly. "I may be wrong, I may be wrong, but I feel that I should realize a good—possibly a considerable sum from their sale."

"I should think you might," I said guardedly.

"Now then," said Mr. Griswold, sitting up a little, "there comes the method of disposing of them."

"Yes."

"I had thought at first of selling the books as a whole to some clergyman. The difficulty there is that there are so few ministers with the means for a purchase of such magnitude."

"Yes."

"Yes. Finally I made up my mind that it would be better to get in touch with some dealer in second hand books."

"I should think so," I said.

"Yes. I weighed the matter quite carefully before taking action," he said. "Then I reached the conclusion that I would come to you. I recalled that at one time I heard you speak of having dealt with these dealers in books."

As he spoke I remembered having talked with him once while in college about buying books at second hand. Since then, it happened, I had many times patronized the book stands on the streets of New York. I was naturally glad to see if I could help him.

"Could you let me have your list?" I asked him.

"Certainly," he said.

"If you will," I said, "the best way, it seems to

me, will be for me to take it with me to New York."

"Very well—excellent," he said.

"There is one thing, however," said Mr. Griswold, hesitating. "Shall you be going soon?"

"Yes," I said, "quite soon."

He still hesitated. "When—how soon?" he said at last. "You see," he went on, "I'm in this position: the fact is, I must make this arrangement, if at all, very soon."

"How soon?" I prompted him.

"I must know," said Mr. Griswold, "by the first of the coming month, at the very latest."

"I can arrange that," I said.

"You can be sure?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," I said. "I'm going down the first of next week. And I'm coming right back again—in three or four days at most."

"That will be in time," said Mr. Griswold, "in ample time."

"Very well," I said. "Then we'll do that."

An expression of marked relief came on his face: He settled back a moment in his chair. His eyes passed about the old room again.

"You have not changed this room, I see," he said. "You've left it exactly as your grandfather had it."

"Yes," I said.

"Yes," said Mr. Griswold. "I'm glad you

have. I'm glad you have." His eyes lingered on one familiar object after another. "I have passed many pleasant hours here."

"Well, I must be going," he said, starting to get up.

"Don't—yet," I begged him.

"My daughter will be wondering where I am," he said. "Oh, one thing more," he exclaimed, settling back. "You see, my daughter— I prefer that you do not speak to her on this matter."

"Yes, sir," I said. "Very well."

He sat still, looking before him several moments before he spoke again. "I prefer that she does not know," he said, a little stiffly.

I noticed his eyes then, how bruised they looked, how deep they seemed to set back in the skull.

"You see," he said, explaining, "the danger is this. She would oppose it; she would do all she could to prevent."

"Why," I asked, "what makes you think so?"

"For this reason," he said. "My daughter has an idea—an entirely false idea of the sentimental value I have attached to my books."

"Oh, yes, I see," I said, remembering what his library had been to him, the pride he had always taken in it.

"Sentiment!" he said, his voice rising. "If it were ten times as great as it is, yet I would sell

them. I can't have—I cannot have things as they are now. No!"

He sat still several seconds more, his hands on the head of his cane, his eyes straight ahead.

"You see, my daughter," he said again, and stopped. "Do you know what she's doing now?" he asked and looked up abruptly. I noticed for the first time a glint in his eye.

"No," I said.

"Sewing," he said, more loudly. "She's sewing at night—secretly, for others, for pay."

He struggled to his feet; and stood, his eyes fixed on mine.

"Sewing," he repeated. "One day's work piled upon another. Daytimes she is my housekeeper, my amanuensis. Daytimes and nighttimes my reader—reading often far into the night—on the pretext that I do not sleep. She does this every day and night of her life, and has for over a year now; and always, without fail, since this trouble of mine, this lameness confines me."

"As you know," he explained, "I was active—quite active before this—this trouble. Now I am confined quite closely to my chair. She makes that a reason for amusing me, diverting my mind."

He started limping down the room, turned awkwardly and came back.

"For what purpose does she do this?" he asked, his eyes searching mine.

" For the sole and only purpose of occupying me; of keeping me from this thinking," he answered himself.

" Thinking," he said absently, " thinking. To keep me from thinking! " he went on more loudly. " She cannot prevent this thinking. No one can. The very thing she's doing now to prevent it makes me think the more. This midnight sewing —this piling night's work upon day—this wearing herself out, year in and year out for me, this taking upon herself the whole burden of that mortgage payment—that responsibility which stands before us at the beginning of next month! "

So that was what they faced! That old familiar financial cancer—that old secret disease which I had seen before since eat out the life of so many of the older families about the street. I had not known before that the Griswolds had one.

" I will not have it. I will not. No," he said, striking his fist upon the marble top of the old center table. " I will not accept all this from her any longer. I cannot. I must have my self-respect. We must all have our self-respect—no matter what our age. Old or young, none of us will be a burden upon others. Never! "

He stopped suddenly, feeling pain from his blow upon the table, perhaps.

" Here," he said, under his breath, " I'm talking too much."

I could just hear him say it. He was thinking aloud, according to his old habit.

He took his hat and cane from beside the chair he had sat in; he would not stay a moment longer.

"You will see me when you return?" he asked.

"At once," I said.

"Any offer—any offer, within reason," he said.

"Very well," I answered.

"I thank you, sir," he said. "Good day."

He clambered down the steps again in silence, hesitated, turned again to the back way, which I knew now, of course, he was taking to escape the notice of his daughter.

I watched him from my window pass once more across the lawn, around the church home—head down, silent, hitching after him his invisible ball and chain.

I saw him once or twice in his own house the next few days; he came in while Celeste and I were talking. And several times my eye roamed casually over his library—estimating the current value of the messages of those seers and prophets along the wall; reviewing again the ranks of the dead Doctors of Divinity in their faded bindings upon his shelves.

Then the first of next week I was in New York again, with my list of them, to place before the booksellers.

There was a Jew, who kept a bookstand on

Twenty-third Street in those days—a good-natured, unshaven, friendly fellow, who sat continually out of the light of day in his dark cellar full of books; slouched down in a round-backed cane chair, his derby hat hanging on the back of his head, living and breathing and having his being in that perpetual dead atmosphere of dried thoughts and withered sentiments—happy as a bug in a tomb.

I took him in the list of Mr. Griswold's books. He looked it over—with my aid. For Mr. Griswold's writing was pretty difficult. He laid it down, when he was done; took it up again. He was undoubtedly interested.

"I have been many years in this business," said the bookman, "but I have not yet seen one like this." And he examined it again.

"Where does it come from?" he asked.

"New England."

"Way up?"

"Yes," I said. "Pretty far up."

He looked it over again, dwelling on the authors' names. "Sometimes we used to get 'em," he said, "—these old Christian libraries—out of them old houses—sometimes twenty years ago, when I was first in this business. Honest, I tell you the trut', I ain't seen one for years. And nothin' like this one—never."

He was interested, sentimentally and profes-

sionally. "Yes, sir," he said sadly, turning the leaves, "and I betcha they cost a lost of money once. Fifteen hundred dollars?" he added, reading. "My, my!"

"What's it worth to you now?" I asked.

"Nothin'!" he responded quickly.

"Nothing," I said. "It's certainly worth something."

"I tell you the trut': I don't want it at no price," he said. "Look here, I show you, look." He turned over the sheets again.

"Jonathan Edwards—well, I get something for him—Paley—yes, something. Kitto—yes, they use him now, some. But who is this—this J. Pye Smith, D.D., I have not heard of him. Then this here, Doctor S. Clarke—who is this man—I do not know him. All these years I'm in business, I do not hear of him—nor all these other fellows here. No, no, no, no—I tell you, I don't want them, I have no call for them."

"You can give something," I said. "These authors' copies, these ones with autographs, Henry Ward Beecher, now that's worth something."

"Maybe, who knows? A dollar—two dollars for him, maybe. But who else?—Mark Hopkins—fifty cents, say. Who else?"

"But something," I said, "you can give something."

"Oh, well—I give twenty-five—yes, I give you thirty dollars. No, that's all. No, positively. No. Honest, I'd rather not take them—at no price.

"Look, I tell you, what I do with you," he said, getting up. "I'll sell *you* some. Look."

He showed me two deep alcoves, filled with books—more and other Doctors of Divinity, row after row, imprisoned there in his dingy catacombs.

"Some I have ten—twenty years. What shall I do—sell them? How? When I get ten cents apiece for them, on the average, I do well. You take them!" he said, the thought striking him. "I tell you, I sell them all to you for that money now—without one word. We say no more. You take them."

"I don't want them," I said, "at any price. They're of no use to me."

"No," he said. "You see? I tell you the trut', there ain't no market for them. There ain't no customers no more for these goods," he said.

He didn't want them—that was clear.

"Ain't it funny," he said, philosophizing, "how books change—all of them. The books we get now—they won't be wort' nothing two years from now. I got an uncle in the provision business. I tell him they've got so they keep eggs with them new ice-making plants now, longer than we can books."

He laughed a short business-like laugh.

"Honest, they do," he said, his round eyes getting rounder. "Honest, I mean it!"

He stood phlegmatically in the door as I left —an untidy, cheerful, philosophical creature.

"Well, you try someone else," he suggested. "You see what they give you."

I did. There was no material advance. I saw soon very clearly what I should have understood before, that Mr. Griswold's library—that wonderful thesaurus of supernatural wisdom of my youth was now practically no asset at all to him.

I had not ever thought, in fact, that it would be a great one. I had imagined, tho, that it would have been worth enough at least to make plausible some transaction by which it would bring him money in some way. A transaction, in fact, in which I myself, under cover of someone else's name, could pose as a purchaser—or better still, as loaner of money on his books as collateral. And, in spite of everything, I had partly made arrangements with my friend, the book dealer, to carry such an enterprise—if I should find it feasible.

The difficulty was, of course, how to make it plausible. For, in carrying it through, I must face the scrutiny in Celeste Griswold's eyes. With her father alone, it might have been different—not so difficult. But sooner or later, Celeste her-

self would know. I doubted my ability to carry out before her quite so transparent a transaction.

But as it happened, I was never destined to attempt it.

I was on the train, going home, when I ran across Mr. Millett, the young minister. He was sitting alone, ahead of me, head down, thinking. He seemed somehow more scared, more shrinking, more flitting than ever. He did not see me at first, but he passed back going through the car, at last, and was naturally held by the social code of his profession to stop and exchange a few amenities with me. I was sorry for him. It was so evidently against the dictates of his personal inclination.

"You are going home, I see," he said, flashing and closing his quick smile.

"Yes. I suppose you are, too," I said.

"Yes, yes," he said. "But not for long." He seemed unusually nervous. "You see," he went on, "I'm leaving the old church. I'm resigning —as you perhaps know."

"No," I said. "I had not heard it."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Millett. "That is my decision."

"I'm sorry," I said. "I thought you liked it."

"I did. I did—in many ways," he said.

"It's too bad," I said. "What will they do without you?"

"It is their present purpose, I understand," said Mr. Millett, "to close the church. That is, I so understand it," he qualified.

"You don't mean that!" I said.

"Yes, that is it, I think," said Mr. Millett. "You will pardon me, won't you, you'll excuse me now, won't you? I must go on. I am on my way through to the next car. I am so glad to have seen you, even for this little minute."

He flashed his quick disappearing smile, and vanished himself—did not return again to the car. I have never seen him since. My last impression of him was like my first—an immature, and frightened soul, continually in flight before some tremendous following doom.

Naturally, for the time being, the matter of the library dropped into secondary importance with me then. My first purpose in the town was to call on Mr. Doty—and understand the new plan.

I sought out Mr. Doty that very afternoon of my arrival; found him in his shining office—still amiable, still with his affectionate hand wandering about your shoulders—but just a little less demonstrative towards me—a shade less cordial. He had been so, I felt, since I had failed to carry out his wish that I consult with Dr. Spurdle concerning my religious doubts.

"How do you do, Calvin? I'm very glad to see you," he said, giving me a chair beside him.

There was the slightest touch of formality in his voice.

"I've come to ask you," I said at once: "Is it true that you're going to close up the church?"

"Yes, Calvin," said Mr. Doty. "It is quite possible. Quite possible. We have called a meeting of the Society for that purpose on next Monday morning.

"Isn't it rather sudden," I asked, "this move?"

"Well, yes," said Mr. Doty. "You see, we had an offer for the building—that was the special reason for acting now."

"An offer—from whom?" I asked.

"From the Odd Fellows," said Mr. Doty. "It seems there is a plan on foot for establishing a temple—an Odd Fellows' temple here. A good idea—an excellent idea, too."

I was silent.

"It is on the trolley line—quite convenient, you see," said Mr. Doty.

I had nothing to say to that.

"You see, it was an offer—a real offer, which would take the building off our hands—relieve the mortgagees," he went on, explaining. "It was unexpected; but we could not disregard it. Offers for church property are not usual."

"No," I said.

"I said the offer was responsible," qualified

Mr. Doty. "But that isn't it either. That didn't close the church. The whole thing is the old church is running down. It would have to be done anyhow. This offer merely brought it to a head."

"What's the plan for the congregation?" I asked.

"The same as before," said Mr. Doty. "We will go over to the Brick Church, to Dr. Spurdle's."

"Millett has gone, I understand," I said.

"Yes," said Mr. Doty, "an excellent young man—but not a strong man. No, not a strong personality."

"And Mr. Griswold," I said, "what's to become of him?"

"Well, I don't know," said Mr. Doty. "That's one of the questions we must take up."

"Poor old Mr. Griswold," I said, thinking aloud.

"Yes, it is too bad," said Mr. Doty. "It's painful."

"Cruel, I should call it. Just plain cruel," I said, too warmly.

"Well, no; no, I don't think so. Not quite that," said Mr. Doty. "You see, you must remember that that church has been kept open for some time, practically for him. There are two sides, my boy, to every question."

"Has he been paid to date?" I asked.

"Well, no," said Mr. Doty. "No—not for the past three months."

"Not paid!" I said.

"He's a problem—a very difficult problem," Mr. Doty hastened to say. "He can do nothing now. And he's grown very old, very erratic. Sometimes I think," said Mr. Doty very confidentially, "that he's not all right—not entirely, you know—not just right."

"You think so?" I said.

"I do. But we won't see him suffer," said Mr. Doty. "No. We'll do something, I think. We have that on our minds and hearts.

"At the same time," went on Mr. Doty,—the other Mr. Doty, the business man, the Doty of affairs,—"there's another way of looking at it. Why should a church be made responsible for a minister? Why is he any different from you or me? We're all dependent, you might say, on some going enterprise. And now this enterprise of his —this church—has died out. It's failed, you might say. If your business failed, or mine, we wouldn't expect anybody to take care of us, would we? No.

"No," he went on. "No. We've done a good deal for the old man, and the old church, first and last. We took up that mortgage ourselves. We got up those revival services—and

they cost money, too. But they didn't do any good. Nothing did any good. They didn't revive—they couldn't. It's all continually been downhill. No; I tell you, Calvin," said Mr. Doty sadly, "I'm afraid the old church has got to go this time."

"I hate to think of its going," I said. "The passing of the old church—forever."

"Yes, I know," said Mr. Doty. "It does seem so. I'd like to keep it open myself."

"For sentiment's sake," I said, "at least—if for nothing more than sentiment."

"Sentiment is all right," said Mr. Doty. "But where are you going to get your money?"

I did not know, of course.

"Does Mr. Griswold know your plans?" I asked him.

"Well, no," said Mr. Doty. "We haven't told him yet."

CHAPTER XIII

What Is Upon Us?

It was Celeste who brought the news to her father.

"I was so glad I heard it first," she said, when she told me of it.

She went back to the house, and found him in his library. It was curious. When he was active, writing sermons, he had done most of his work away from it, upstairs. But now he sat there a good share of the day, surrounded by his books.

He looked up at her when she came into the room.

"Father," she said, as casually as she could, "would it surprise you if they had to close the church, after all?"

He looked at her in silence.

"What time do they propose to close it?" he asked after a little.

"Pretty soon, I'm afraid, dear," said Celeste.

"When do they have the Society meeting?" he asked her. "When do they act on it?"

"Next week; next Monday evening," said Celeste.

Then there was silence between them.

"They have had a chance to sell the building," said Celeste.

He did not ask her to whom—unusual as the proceeding was; she did not have the heart to tell him. She sank down by him, and took his hand, and held it for a long time, neither of them speaking. Then after a while he said:

"Little daughter, I would like to be alone."

So she went out and left him.

He didn't speak of it again or scarcely at all, she said when she told me.

"I wish you would go in and see him," said Celeste, "and talk with him."

So I went in—alone. He sat there in his armchair by the window—a big figure, a little crumpled, but still suggestive of the strength that was—bone and sinew and gristle—looking out the window toward the street, along the side of the little old brown church.

He did not speak of what had happened, and I did not.

I tried to broach the sale of his library. I had intended merely to tell him that it might be best to wait a little before trying it. Celeste was out of the room—purposely—of course.

But he didn't care to speak of it.

"Another time; another time," he said.

Then we talked on other matters, very calmly, very pleasantly.

He spoke of my grandfather several times. "I see a look in you like him," he said, examining my face. "But more like your father; more like your father! Your mind is like his. A restless mind. Pretty restless—isn't it?"

"Yes, sir," I said. "I suppose it is."

"I'm very glad you came," he said when I left him—and turned, and started looking out the window again.

"He's that way a good deal now," said Celeste, when I told her of his talk. "His mind goes back. He speaks of mother quite a little."

"How does he look to you?" she asked.

"He seems very quiet," I said, "and unexcited."

"I don't like it. I'd rather he'd be some other way. He ought to let me read to him more; he ought to let me do something for him."

I smiled. "Ought" was a favorite word with Celeste—used both for herself and others. She didn't notice me. She sighed.

"Do you think he ought to go to that meeting?" she asked.

"He'll go anyway, won't he?" I answered.

"I suppose so," said Celeste.

So Mr. Griswold was there, at the corporation meeting, that Monday night. I was there myself, at the solicitation of Mr. Tubbs—but legitimately

enough, too. I still had an interest, strictly speaking, in the business of the church, as a permanent pew holder in it.

We met in the vestry. There were nine of us, when we were all there. We greeted each other in a rather subdued way, and sat down in the round-backed, yellow, wooden chairs.

I looked around the little place, dim under the light of its few bracket lamps—the worn, cheap carpet, the battered hymn books, the low ceiling, the painted walls, dulled by the fingers of long-grown generations of children.

"Pretty seedy," said Mr. Tubbs, who sat beside me. "Pretty seedy. It will take quite a lot to fix it up, so it's right." He was already, as a leading Odd Fellow, assuming an air of proprietorship.

The meeting organized, with Mr. Doty in the chair. The clerk of the corporation sat beside him, the druggist of the Village; a thin, sandy man—not a very regular attendant at church—who worked in his clerical capacity in a somewhat off-hand way, always with a quill toothpick in his mouth.

Mr. Griswold came in, last of all. He sat a row ahead of me, at the end of a line of empty chairs.

The situation was explained by Mr. Doty; in fact, the whole meeting was conducted by him—

excellently, I thought; in a clear-cut, business-like way.

The matter was very simple—as he showed. There would be great regret, he said, beginning, at the closing of the dearly beloved church. But after all, might it not be God's leading? The congregation would be welcomed in Dr. Spurdle's church. He was there now at Mr. Doty's invitation, to give the welcome.

There was more than could be said of the sadness of the time. But much, too, on the other side as well. He spoke of the waste in overhead charges for two churches, where one would do. He did not think that waste, any waste, was acceptable, or praiseworthy in God's eyes, more than in man's. And then Mr. Doty passed directly into the meeting's business.

He spoke concisely and clearly of the financial impossibility of the situation. The fact was that the church could not go further. It had not the money to pay its bills. He showed some of them —a coal bill in particular—for last winter's coal. How could they pay it? They could not.

It had seemed that the church must be closed anyway. And then, suddenly, by luck some might call it, but he felt that it was much more like the work of Providence—there was this opportunity to sell—an unexpected, an unusual chance, which he would call upon Mr. Tubbs to explain.

Mr. Tubbs explained, somewhat clumsily, the hopes and aspirations of the Odd Fellows, whom he represented, for a permanent home. There was a great lack, he said, of good halls in the Village. Other organizations, the Red Men in particular, had been approached, and been found to have a desire to co-operate; to take a hall on other nights, if one could be found. And so, it had just happened that at this time they were in the market for a building. He knew—everybody knew, that the old church was hard up; and was probably going to close anyway. It was only a few minutes from the Village, on the trolley line. It might do. Others thought so. And so he had spoken to Mr. Doty. That was all.

Mr. Griswold did not move nor look up as he spoke. He sat there, with his hands on his cane, staring down—motionless as a graven image.

Mr. Doty continued the business of the meeting. He said another side of the subject, upon which something must be said, was the matter of the mortgage, and the men who had taken it. They had come forward, and assumed the burden manfully. They must certainly be considered. And this offer would take the burden from them —yes, and pay, perhaps, some of the other debts besides.

They were there, the holders of the mortgage —all of them. Mr. Doty, of course, was one;

and the clerk of the meeting, the druggist. The third was the provision man who drove his cart about the Street. A pleasant, rosy-faced, quiet man, who could scarcely afford to lose the money.

It was a foregone conclusion from the first. The provision man said a few words hesitatingly. Dr. Spurdle gave his fluent invitation for his church. There was ample room in the Brick Church—still ampler room in the hearts and memories of its people, for the reception of the sons and daughters of its own mother, the ancient church of the valley. The occasion was sad in many ways—parting was always sad. Yet we must remember: it was not brick or clapboards that made the temple of God; it was spirit. He spoke, in closing, of his delight in some fine sentiments in Rabbi Ben Ezra.

Mr. Griswold, so far, had said nothing. He still sat motionless, his eyes focussed now, apparently, on a coarse, brown wall map of Palestine behind the platform.

"Can't we hear from someone else?" asked Mr. Doty. "Can't we hear a word from him, to whom our love and reverence goes out particularly at this time—from our dear old pastor, Mr. Griswold?"

But the old man shook his head.

There was nothing to be said, really; it was already settled. The only voice, that could be said

to sound a note of questioning, or reluctance, was that of the bearded man who prayed, who spoke last of all, arising, as always, with his Bible in his hand. He was just a little doubtful. They had been richly blessed there, he felt; the spirit had descended upon them in full measure. He had hoped that the old church might be snatched, even now, a brand from the burning. But he finally acknowledged the fuller wisdom of the other men—these men of affairs. They had plumbed the problem more deeply than he. He could only trust their great judgment and accept. No doubt they would continue to be richly blessed there, as here—in their new Bethel, their new church home.

And so the vote was taken, and passed; and Mr. Doty, and the clerk, and the provision man—as the responsible men of affairs—were chosen to carry out the settlements. The old church was formally ended. And still Mr. Griswold sat without speaking.

We all sat for a moment, waiting. It was very quiet. Mr. Doty sat looking down on us, in white-vested benevolence. The nervous clerk chewed at his toothpick. The old, old man, the octogenarian who attended Mr. Griswold's prayer meetings, sat chin down on his cane. You could hear his difficult breathing in the silence.

It was the man who prayed, that finally called

Mr. Griswold to his feet, for his final discourse, after it was all done.

"Before we go," he pleaded, "before we go, will not our dear leader, our shepherd of long years, speak? Will he not tell us what is on his heart?"

The old man shook his head again, at first. Then, arousing himself, he struggled slowly to his feet. It was very still; his cane, which he had placed against the chair before him, fell loudly to the floor.

"I am awkward," he said, in apology, and stood there, looking down at the handful of men in his old gathering place for prayer. Mr. Tubbs, sitting beside me, yawned and moved his feet.

"To what end?" said the old man heavily. "To what will it lead? Who will listen when I speak?"

"All, every one of us in this place!" said Mr. Doty warmly. And still the old man hesitated.

"Thirty years I have shown you. I have cried aloud to you," he said finally. His voice had risen a little. "To what purpose?"

He paused again; went on.

"Now this has come. At last it is upon us—what we feared—what we saw coming for so long!

"For this is not new. I saw it. You saw it," he said, extending his long finger toward Mr.

Doty; "and you!" he said to the old, old man—"long years ago!"

Mr. Tubbs nudged me significantly with his elbow.

"So now it is here. To-morrow we strip this sanctuary. And it becomes a playhouse—a house for grown men, in child's play."

Mr. Tubbs sat up, stiffened with resentment. Mr. Griswold, half facing me, looked up now. I saw the momentary flash of his eyes under their ragged brows.

"But this is a little thing," he said, more loudly—"a very little thing to what is coming close behind it! To what I see; and what you see—exactly as you saw before in this one church—is rushing down upon us. It is almost here. You will see it, if you will only look."

He had held, by one shaky hand, to the seat before him; his voice had not been quite steady. But now it steadied and grew firmer.

"Let us be men. Let us look at it before it overwhelms it," he called, and stopped.

They sat uneasily, the little congregation—arm on hymn book, looking down, waiting. Mr. Tubbs shuffled his feet a little; Mr. Doty looked down doubtfully under his eyebrows.

The speaker stood a moment; his deep-set, melancholy eyes turned about the narrow confines of the little room.

"You will remember this church—the place of worship, when it was the House of God!" He addressed himself seemingly to the octogenarian, who nodded slightly, his chin upon his cane. "The temple of a living God—full, full of worshipers. You remember it—and you, and you!" he said, pointing. "The House of God—an ever-present God—a living God.

"Now this—now this handful!

"Strange, you will say. Why? Who did this thing? I will tell you; I will tell you," he said, leaning forward; speaking lower: "The foes in our own household—the whisperers!"

He paused.

"The whisperers, the traitors, of whom Paul speaks—the whisperers; those which creep into houses!"

A strange and eerie earnestness had come into his voice and manner. I saw Mr. Tubbs turn toward me a furtive and suggestive glance.

"Digging, digging, digging—sapping at the foundations of our faith," the speaker went along, in a constrained, mysterious voice. "Where did we hear them first? What were they whispering of when we heard their voices thirty years ago? The Creation, was it not?" The octogenarian, appealed to, nodded once again.

"Just a breath. Just a whisper. Just the lisping of a spring night wind in the maple leaves!

softly; lightly! Was it possible, was it possible? they whispered, we had misunderstood—we had misinterpreted that first, most distant period of revelation—the inspired narrative of Moses of the Creation?

"'There it is,' we said, 'in black and white—in God's book.'

"'Yes, yes,' they whispered. 'But it may be; it might be we have misconceived God's meaning. Might it not be an allegory—a lesson—not meant as history?' Oh, they were humble then; very reverent!"

The bearded man nodded now. His eyes were brightening.

"Where do we find them next?" demanded the old speaker—"creeping, creeping, creeping on? You know. You remember. At God's punishment. The entire scheme of Divine Justice." The octogenarian nodded—deeply now. "Probation—probation—might not divine love overcome divine justice?"

"'But there it is,' we said, 'in black and white in the Bible. What are you doing? What are you trying to do? Destroy the book of God—destroy all revelation?'

"'No, no,' they answered. 'Never. We speak with greatest reverence of God's book—of revelation.' But still their whisperings grew."

He paused. "Off—'way off," remarked Mr.

Tubbs, leaning over toward me. He touched his knuckle to his forehead.

"Then what?" asked Mr. Griswold. The man who prayed sat upright now—and stiff.

"They were moving, moving, moving," said Mr. Griswold, in a strange and stealthy voice, "bolder now; a little bolder—where, at what? Against the miracles. Against revelation itself!

"'They are in the Bible,' we said—'in its very fabric—woven in and in. They *are* revelation—its signs and seals. The very Scripture itself!'

"'Sit still. Sit still,' they said. 'The Bible is something more than that—something higher; something more satisfying.'

"'What?' we asked them. 'What? Show us! How can a book of fairy tales be satisfying to man's immortal soul?'

"'Wait,' they said. 'Sit still. Wait, we will show you.'

"And still we heard the whisperings grow—among the immature, among our enemies, in our churches themselves.'

"Right; you are right!" interpolated the man who prayed. His eyes were kindled now, with an anxious fire.

A greater flame was in Mr. Griswold's eyes. His worn old figure shook with a nervous tension too strong for him.

"And then—then—where do we find them?"

he called. "Where? At our citadel—at the very resurrection itself! 'Was there a resurrection?' they were whispering. 'Is there an immortal soul? Was there really, then, a Savior? Was there; was there? We only ask. We just suggest!'

"But now their whisperings rose. They ran around the world, a hissing—and a great reproach! On every lip! Caught up by boys and children! That whisper, that awful whisper they began! It filled the earth! It never ceased upon our ears!

"'What have you done?' we asked these men —these whisperers. 'What have you left? Are you destroying faith? Are you killing Christianity?'

"They answered with high looks, and twisted lip. 'Hush, hush, be still. You are belated. You are old, old; you are very old. Your vision has grown dim. Can you not see? We have something nobler; something better. Breadth of vision; higher interpretations,—long, mysterious words—cold and unsatisfying as mouthfuls of north wind!

"'No, no!' we said. 'This has gone too far. Be specific. What is it you see? What do you bring us in your hands?'

"'Very well,' they said, 'we will show you. We will unfold our scheme. We will show you the new Christianity!'"

He stopped. The resonance of his voice died. He stared before him, a bright glitter in his eye.

"The new Christianity! What was it? Was it new? No, not one word—all picked out from the Bible—from the book they left in ruins under them. Rags, and shags, and tatters, they had picked out from the wreck they made—like gleaners in a ruined city. This was their new Christianity, the thing they gave us back—a few selections, a few verses from the Bible—taken at the pleasure of Smith and Jones—of Tom and Dick and Harry—a Christianity without a Creator, without a Judge, without a Bible. A Christianity without a resurrection, without an immortality; without a Christ!

"And now they sit inside the doors of their emptying churches, and cry aloud, and wonder, why the people pass by them—laughing.

"'Come in,' they call. 'Come in!'

"'There is no God—no living God!' these call back to them as they pass. 'There is no Christ! You have told us so yourselves.'

"'Ah. But listen to His words,' they say. 'His words.'

"'His words?' they answer back again. 'Can myths speak anything but myths?'

"'Ah, but listen. Come! The higher ethics; the fuller interpretation. The broader vision of the Bible.'

"'Why not call us to the worship of the statute books of Massachusetts?' the people cry back to them. 'Why not? We know at least no one has called these fairy tales.'

"And so they shake their heads and pass along —to their own desires and devices—and destruction.

"In vain your revivals—in vain your gospel circus shows—your stereopticon lectures on Alaska! Your Browning readings—your pretty poetry—and your first lessons in politics! The people pass you by.

"'A living God,' they cry. 'A living God—Him only will we worship!'

"Where are they; where are the people gone?" demanded the old speaker. "Are they in your churches Sundays? Are they worshipers of God? Let us be men. Let us no longer palter, and cast down our eyelids like schoolgirls. Let us look at this thing boldly as it comes.

"Look about—the closed and vacant sanctuaries upon these hills; the emptying temples of the great cities! Is this a people of worshipers? Is this a Christian nation now? Is it? Hardly."

"Crazy!" whispered Mr. Tubbs, leaning toward me again. "Crazy!"

"Hardly—now!" The speaker was passing on. "Hardly! And what of three generations from now—what of the time before us in the

future—just that little length of time, which eyes in this room have looked back into the past? What if this tide sweeps on?" he asked, and answered his own question.

"A pagan nation—heathen—a nation lost in darkness—without hope, without a light—without a Christ!

"Let us not mince phrases. You know it. I know it. The day of Christianity is dying in this nation—unless this nation turns itself!"

He stopped. The man who prayed sat on the edge of his chair, his Bible in his hand—ready to spring upon his feet.

"Crazy," said Mr. Tubbs again, leaning over. "Crazy as a bat!"

"Turn, turn—return!" the voice of the speaker rose in the dimly lighted room. The handful of listeners heard him—head down, arms upon their hymn books. Mr. Doty was ill at ease. Mr. Spurdle's hand arranged his necktie. The nervous clerk sat gnawing furiously at his toothpick.

"Turn back," cried Mr. Griswold, "let us turn back to a living God! To a living Christ that was crucified. Let us show Him forth! Let us sweep away—let us sweep away these doubts—this gathering of darkness! Hush these whispers—silence them! Bring back mankind its hope!

"Hope! Hope!" he cried. "They have killed man's hope!"

He stood a moment, speechless.

"I warn you," he went on, speaking a little less fiercely. "I warn you! As I have warned you now for thirty years. You must turn back to God—to the one living God—and to his living Son. One God—one only Son—one Holy Spirit. One only triune God. For as surely as you do not turn again, so surely is this nation lost. As Tyre and Sidon; as Nineveh and Babylon. Lost! Paid the penalty! Smoke and ashes! Gone forever—slipped down forever into the Great Pit."

He stopped again, swayed a little. And stood there for a few seconds more. He seemed bewildered.

"I have said what I wish to say," he said at last, wiped the perspiration on his forehead, and sat down.

We sat silent then—looking down—all but the bearded man who prayed. He had been waiting. He was on his feet at once, trembling, on fire to exhort.

"We have heard it!" he cried. "We have heard it! We have heard the word. We must act. We must organize!" His eye passed from one figure to the other. He opened his Bible to read.

I looked across. Mr. Griswold was rising

slowly—taking up his hat. He stopped and looked about the room once—a little dazed, he seemed, still. His lips moved.

"A voice crying in the wilderness," he said, like a man talking entirely to himself.

And then he walked heavily to the door. Several looked up, but no one thought to follow him.

We sat there after he had left, with downcast eyes, until the exhorter had finished his outpouring. Then we adjourned. I myself walked on toward home with Mr. Tubbs.

Just before us, as we went out, were the octogenarian, and the man who prayed, walking very slowly, passing down the steps.

"A powerful discourse," said the octogenarian, leaning heavily upon his cane. "A powerful discourse. It stirred us. It stirred us!"

"We must act. We must organize!" said the bearded figure. "We must spread the News."

But the old, old man did not answer him. He was busy with his walking.

CHAPTER XIV

The Darkened Shrine

I WAS with Mr. Tubbs upon his piazza. He was explaining to me, in more detail than I had heard before, the plans for the new uses of the old church.

"A temple of Odd-Fellowship," said Mr. Tubbs. "A big thing. A good hall. A place where folks can get together, and have some up-to-date enjoyment. A big thing—a big thing, I tell you, for this place!

"And we got it," said Mr. Tubbs, winking broadly—"we got it for a song."

I was getting restive, when I saw the figure of a woman—of Celeste coming across the lawn.

"Have you seen father?" she asked.

"No," I answered.

"Will you come with me, please?" she asked me.

Mr. Tubbs got up, hesitated—sat down again. The request was very clearly directed at me alone.

"I'm anxious," she said, as we went away together.

"We'll find him somewhere," I told her.

"I'm afraid he may be in the church," she said.

"Upstairs?"

"Yes. He was there once before," she told me.

Every one was gone; the place was closed and locked. But Celeste had a key to the side entrance. We let ourselves into the vestry, and following her, I went to the entrance of the front stairs. It was dark, but there was light enough from the electric lamps on the street, so that we could pick our way through the place.

We went upstairs. I felt again in the dark that suspense—that little gasp of expectation, which I have sensed in the entry of the church, before finally passing in the closed doors of the house of God, always, since I was a child. We moved quietly. Celeste pushed back without a sound the swinging door, which led into the side aisle. She motioned for greater silence. We stood together inside.

She gripped my arm then. And I saw that her father was there. I could barely see him. On the platform—a little back and to one side of the pulpit we could see a figure!

A small, round spot of electric light, coming through the window—through a little opening in the foliage of the elm trees outside—fell upon his white beard. There were other smaller spots —upon his forehead; upon a hand, which rested

upon the great Bible, lying open on the pulpit. The rest of him—the figure in black broadcloth—was almost invisible; swallowed up in the deep background.

He stood rigid—motionless. He might perhaps have heard our coming. The slightest noise swelled to a tumult in the place. I waited for what Celeste would do. Her hand was on my arm, governing me. She did not move. We stood there seconds—minutes possibly. The black figure upon the platform stood erect, motionless—so still it seemed like nothing living.

It stirred then—spoke:

"Oh, Hope of Israel!" it called softly. "Thou God——"

He was praying. He stopped, stood motionless again.

"Thou one—triune—and only God! How long? How long?"

He stopped again.

"Arise! Arise!" he started suddenly. "Arise, with healing in Thy wings."

He stopped in sudden silence—a dim and motionless gray priest, behind a silent shrine. The solemn place seemed choked with the immanence of some ancient winged Asian deity.

"How long?" asked the old voice again. "How long?"

Far, far away, there rose the hollow call of a

locomotive—the cry of the moving machine, which year after year now grows to disturb our nights.

The light and shadow moved just perceptibly upon the unmoving face. A little wind was stirring.

"Where art Thou?" demanded the voice again. "Why hidest Thou Thy face in darkness?"

I felt Celeste's light, firm hand upon my arm. My thoughts went back again to that other time we three stood there—that day we two children had joined the old White Church together. The day the preacher called out his discourse upon Elijah and his triumph over the priests of Baal.

"Thy people die. Thy people perish! Lost—lost—lost! Darkness covers all the earth, and gross darkness the people."

The wind was freshening; a flicker of light through the shifting foliage touched his eye.

"Arise, shine!" he said quickly. "Lift up the light of Thy countenance upon us! Lift it up!"

He stopped—listened, apparently. In the distance toward the village, we heard the hourly trolley car as it came into the Street.

"Thou that ridest upon the Heavens," said the voice—and stopped again, listening.

The sound approached; the jar and thunder of the rolling machine filled the silent, empty place.

"Thou that spake on Horeb! Thou that thunderest on Sinai!" said the voice in broken intervals. "Speak!"

The car had passed the door.

"Speak, speak! Send us a sign!" called the old, wild voice. "If Thou wouldst, Thou couldst send signs and wonders!"

The noise of the trolley died away.

"No!" the voice said dully. "No!"

I looked at Celeste questioningly.

"Not yet, dear," she whispered. "Not yet!"

"How long?" the voice was saying once again. "How long?"

The wind outside was rising. It tossed and lifted the lithe branches of the elm trees. The light of the electric street lamp fell upon his eye—for longer now. I saw the glitter of his eye-ball, from where we stood.

He moved, and shook his head. It seemed to annoy him. But the same suggestion came to him again.

"Arise, shine!" he said. And was silent for a long time.

We heard the freshening wind in the elm trees. The circuit in the street light was disturbed. We heard the electricity hiss and stammer on its carbons; its blue light flickered through the place. But still we did not move; for still Celeste's hand was restraining me. And still the speaker did not

call again, until the light shone once again, full into his eyes.

"A light," he said then, absently. "A light that shineth in the darkness." He paused. It came again.

"Shineth—until the day dawn—until the day dawn!"

His voice grew heavier now, less vibrant. "Dearly beloved. Until the day dawn!"

I knew a change was coming in him. Celeste's fingers were tightening on my arm.

"Dearly beloved," he said again—"until the day dawn!"

"He's going back," Celeste whispered, moving for the first time. "He's remembering!"

He roused himself a little. A miracle had come, in fact, with his praying—the sign and wonder that he had desired. He was back again—talking to his dead people—of the hopes of thirty years before.

"It is coming, Dearly Beloved," he was telling them. "Do we not see it? It has dawned for us. It is dawning now for all mankind. It comes; it comes! It moves across the mountains—the islands of the sea! It is on us —it is here!

"In this new century. This nineteenth century —this century of wonders and new light—it is upon us! Who knows what eyes now here will see of its coming? Who knows what this cen-

tury will not disclose, to us, the followers of the Christ?"

He stopped. The wind was falling. The light passed from his eyes; came again.

"What changes—what changes eyes that are here will see! Will they wait until the dawn—wait until the day dawn—and the day-star—Will they wait till the Day-star arise?" His voice grew slow—slower—dragged down to silence.

The flurry of wind was gone; the long branches of the elm trees drooped; the shadows moved no longer on the high windows, or on his face.

For a long time he was silent. Beside me, at my shoulder, I could feel the body of Celeste grow tenser and more tense. Then all at once another voice came from the pulpit platform—a changed voice.

"It is dark here," it said, fretfully, like a wakened child.

"Father!" Celeste Griswold whispered quickly. But there was no answer.

"This is strange—unusual—" said Mr. Griswold's voice at last.

She called him again; but he did not hear her.

"I do not understand this," he said again. "They are gone. They are gone, it seems. All gone. Strange!"

"Father!" Celeste called once again. And now moved toward him.

The suggestion of her voice had reached him at last.

"My daughter," he was saying, "I must find my daughter. She can't have gone—without me!"

She had come quite near to him now, walking softly up the dim aisle.

"No! No! She hasn't, dear," she said to him.

"Celeste!" he said quickly. "Celeste! I was afraid that you had gone!"

"Oh, no, dear," she told him—and laughed a little. "What made you think that?"

"So many have," he answered wearily. "So many have."

"Oh, no, I'm here, father," said Celeste, in her most cheery voice.

She was at the platform now—I following her. She took his arm lightly to guide him.

"It's dark here," he complained again. "We seem to be here in the dark."

His mind was clearing—but was still not very clear.

"We are in the church—are we not?" he asked them, coming down the stairs.

"Yes, dear," she answered him—"of course we are."

"I see," he said, a little wonderingly. But did not question further.

"Yes, dear," his daughter told him. "But it's time to go."

"Yes," he said, like a sleepy child. "I know. It's time to go, Little Daughter. It's time to go."

He was perfectly tractable. We brought him home without the slightest trouble. But when he was there, it came—the final stroke. We scarcely got him to his bedroom when it came upon him; and I was rushing for the doctor.

I stayed below, waiting, when the doctor came. He came down from upstairs at last—for a moment, with an order for something I could do.

"They've got him this time," he said crisply; "they've broken him at last."

He hurried back again. And I waited. Once or twice he was down, alert—busy with his work.

I asked him if I could be of any use upstairs. "No, no," he said, "why should you be there? No, stay away. Why should any one, but we who have to, see it?"

But Celeste, of course, he could not move away from where she was—and stayed.

I waited there, in the old library, among the dead Doctors of Divinity, those intolerable, dragging hours of listening and suspense. I heard the little movements in the room above—the silences.

I sat and rose; and opened pages of the old man's books; and closed them and put them back upon their shelves again. But all the time my frightened mind dwelt in imagination in the room above —with the dying man, the woman—the one woman, that one figure dearest in the world to me.

It was five o'clock when it came. The lower stars were fading in the high translucence of the dawn. And the sons of men were waking, across the barren hills of old New England; across the land of my own people. In its fields, beside the gaunt stacks of its factories; within its misty cities on the sea, they woke again into another day. And as I watched it coming, out of the old library window, he was gone—my dear, old friend. Gone; and with him went, for me, a generation—a generation of strong and honest men. There was a stir in the room above—a muffled cry. I knew that he was dead.

I stood below, rigid, listening—waiting.

She came to me at last—down the old steep stairs. The doctor made her come away—sent her to me.

I stood waiting in the door.

"Celeste!" I called.

She came into my arms—dry-eyed, silent. Her body shuddered lightly against mine—and lay still.

"I'm so tired, dear," she whispered. "So tired—so tired."

Across her white face fell the light—the first warm sunlight of another day.